The Brazilian Women's Movement against Violence

Discourses on Violence within an Intercultural Framework of Communication and Learning

Inauguraldissertation
zur Erlangung des Grades eines Doktors der Philosophie
im Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaften
der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität
zu Frankfurt am Main

vorgelegt von

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2002

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5 Februar 2002

Zusammenfassung

Die Autorin behandelt am Beispiel Brasilien das universelle Thema der Gewalt gegen Frauen in einem international vergleichenden und interkulturell kommunikativen Zusammenhang. Wichtiges Anliegen ihrer Fallstudie zur Gewalt gegen Frauen ist deutlich zu machen, dass die kontextbedingt aktive Bewegung der Frauen wider Gewalt in Brasilien sich nicht nur von Aktionen und Diskursen aus dem internationalen Bereich inspiriert hat, sondern einen beachtenswerten eigenen Beitrag leistet, von dem auch andere Frauenbewegungen lernen könnten. Voraussetzung hierzu ist allerdings, dass in allen diesen Gesellschaften, denen innerhalb der stratifizierten globalen Zusammenhänge unterschiedlicher Status zugewiesen wird, ein interkulturell kommunikativer Lernprozess stattfindet.

In der Einleitung zu dieser Studie wird auf die spezifische Problematik des Themas hingewiesen, die Untersuchungsmethode und die eigene Argumentationsweise vorgestellt, die eng mit der Motivation zur Behandlung des Themas verwoben ist. Im ersten Kapitel wird die Gewalt gegen Frauen als zugleich universales wie auch partikulares Problem diskutiert, und dementsprechend die divergierenden Definitionen der Gewalt gegen Frauen, die vielfältigen Ansätze zum Verständnis von Frauen aus verschiedenen Gesellschaften und schließlich die Vielfalt der Erfahrungen von Frauen gegenüber Gewalt im Licht der interkulturellen Kommunikation vorgestellt und kritisch analysiert. Im zweiten Kapitel werden die diskursiv analytischen Interpretationen der Gewalt gegen Frauen im Licht der interkulturellen Kommunikation behandelt. Die Autorin knüpft an das diskursive Modell der Bedürfnisinterpretation von Nancy Fraser an und wendet es als methodischer Ansatz zur Interpretation der Gewalt gegen Frauen an. Sie weist auf die gesellschaftspolitischen und kulturellen Grenzen dieses Modells (auf die nördliche Hemisphäre beschränkt) hin und versucht es im Lichte des Ansatzes von Patrick Dias zu interkulturellem Lernen im Kontext der international ungleichen Machtstrukturen kritisch weiterzuentwickeln. Das dritte Kapitel analysiert die relevanten gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen mit ihren diskursiven Konstruktionen zum Verständnis von Frauen und deren Stellung im spezifischen Kontext Brasiliens. Das vierte Kapitel stellt die brasilianische Frauenbewegung wider Gewalt gegen Frauen in ihren historischen Zusammenhängen dar: von ihren Anfängen über deren Strategien in den Achtzigern bis im ausgehenden zwanzigsten Jahrhundert hinein; und es schließt mit den Diskussionen im 21. Jahrhundert ab, die verstärkt unter der Metapher der *Cidadania* (Aufbau der Zivilgesellschaft) steht. Kapitel fünf fasst die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung zusammen und führt den in der Studie angewandten diskursiv analytischen Ansatz im Rahmen der interkulturell immer noch bestehenden herrschaftlichen Kommunikationsstruktur mit einem Plädoyer für ein interkulturelles Lernen, das die globalen Ungleichheiten nicht verkennt, weiter.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is a result of collective multi-cultural efforts involving communication and dialogue among people of various countries and backgrounds. I am indebted to the contribution of numerous individuals who gave generously of their time to share their ideas and insights with me as well as to the institutions and individuals who supported my work.

I would like to thank first and foremost, Patrick Dias for his continued guidance, encouragement and insightful criticism during my doctoral studies. Also, Nancy Fraser was most gracious in taking time from her busy schedule to discuss with me her discourse model. I would also like to thank all of my colleagues at the *Kolloquium* in International Education for their helpful comments while I was developing my project.

I owe a great deal to the individuals who shared with me their time, information, experiences and analytical perceptions so that I could get a better grasp of the women's movement in Brazil and its global positioning. Although I cannot name them all, I would like to mention particularly Denise Carreira Soares; Matilde Ribeiro; Graziela Acquaviva Pavez; Odenizia Andrade Dourado; Olívia Rangel; Ana Maria Gomez; Jaci Curada as well as the numerous police women and directors of women's centers and organizations who took the time to answer my questions. Concerning the women's movement in Germany, I am grateful to Nevâl Gültekin; Ilse Lichtenthäler; and Lúcia Rolim-Schultz among many others.

I was fortunate to have family and friends whose unwavering confidence kept me on a positive track, particularly Elmer and Florine Griesse and José and Ilka Nascimento, Sarah and Martín and the neighbors at Dessauerhaus. Amós Nascimento was my *porto seguro* as we both took on the ups and downs of living and studying in three distinct countries. His intellectual critique, fine eye for detail and emotional support helped me to ride the waves.

Finally, the scholarship I received through the University of Frankfurt from the Drittes Hochschulsonderprogramm (HSP III – Hessen) was indispensable for the completion of this study.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps there is no other issue that straddles the line between particular and universal, personal and public as capriciously as that of violence against women. Reference to violence against women permeates both private and public spheres: it can be found in religious documents, in idiomatic expressions, in jokes, in laws, in traditional proverbs across cultures and in international agreements. It has been defined in terms of formal litigation or according to the common sense of the community. It can be considered a personal option or a criminal act. Therefore, in order to make sense of these diverse conceptions, an analysis of common aspects and specific forms is necessary.

Violence against women can be revealed even in an area as sublime as that of literature. In 1958, Jorge Amado, one of Brazilian's most popular authors, used the ambiguity of this subject as the *Leitmotif* of one of his novels. The book, *Gabriela, cravo e canela,* tells the story of an impoverished but sensuous and free-spirited woman named Gabriela and her relationship with Nacib, the owner of a bar. The story is set in Ilhéus, a small traditional city in the northeastern coastal region of Brazil, where a general climate of change, identified by the townsfolk as an upward trend towards 'progress,' permeates the city. The most concrete representative aspect of the progressive trend is the project of widening the port so that large European ships could load themselves with cocoa directly at the city.

Amado begins his story by reporting a violent crime of passion that would serve as a backdrop to the main plot. A well-known and prosperous man of the town had found his wife with her lover and, out of jealousy and anger, murdered them both. At his trial he would argue that he had murdered both individuals in legitimate defense of his own honor. The 'honor defense' bases it argument on the idea that such violence is a private issue of male honor rather than a public criminal concern. Traditionally, such cases had been decided in favor of the accused.

After making a short comment regarding this crime, Amado initiates the story of Gabriela who is employed by the owner of a bar, Nacib, to work as his housecleaner and cook. Her sensuous nature is soon perceived by the men at the bar and by Nacib. Despite the obvious class and ethnic differences between them, the owner finally decides to marry Gabriela. However, Gabriela finds it difficult to fit into the tight upper-class shoes of the town's high society and prefers to kick them off and escape from the gala balls to dance with the people barefoot in the streets. Neither does she adhere to the strict sexual confines of patriarchal marriage.

Upon discovering that Gabriela has been unfaithful to him, Nacib is caught in a dilemma. He could not bring himself to kill Gabriela, but neither could he allow her unfaithfulness to go unpunished and still save face within the community. After discussing the case with a lawyer friend, he comes upon a solution. Because of Gabriela's ambiguous background, he is able to annul the marriage; thus, her adulterous act becomes the mere promiscuity of a lower-class unmarried woman. She continues to work as his cook, is free to participate in the cultural activities of her class and ethnic group, while continuing to maintain sexual relations with Nacib as lover. After relating this amicable and 'honorable' solution, Amado reveals the results of the background murder trail: the accused is found guilty and sentenced to prison. And the port, linking the town to the rest of the modern world, is completed.

This literary piece elucidates the tensions between conflicting conceptions of violence against women. Although the uncovering of underlying hegemonic tendencies within the project of modernity – as seen in the belief in progress – has questioned the redeeming qualities of this project, the currently strong appeal to human rights – and more specifically women's rights and the inclusion of laws and norms to defend these rights – can be classified

as modern 'progressive' phenomena. Amado portrays progress as the judicial intolerance for violence against women and the development of cultural attitudes against such violence. The advent of modernity is seen as progressive, as opening ports and broadening horizons, but it is juxtaposed with other seemingly universal structures such as traditional (non-modern) attitudes concerning the double standard applied to men and women in regards to sexuality, and ethnic and class stereotypes that lead to the oppression of women.

However, despite recourse to universal concepts and practices, Jorge Amado's novel is better known for its contextuality, its regional flavor and the development of singular personalities. Amado transmits to the reader the fine details of life in a small northeastern town in Brazil through his description of culinary specialties, cultural rituals and peculiar hierarchical relationships. What I find interesting in this novel for the study of violence against women is that Amado's character found a non-violent solution to a problem involving his relationship with his wife by using the means available to him within the context of a provincial town in northeastern Brazil. Caught between traditional patriarchal attitudes and approaching modernity, between private emotions and public honor, Nacib employed a particular and parochially acceptable intervention. However, Amado's novel speaks not only to the northeastern Brazilian context, for local attitudes and general categories intertwine with private emotions and intimate relationships beyond Brazilian borders.

In this dissertation I will also deal with universal categories and cultural contextualizations as they apply to the issue of violence against women. The choice of the subject of violence against women, the theoretical approach selected for this study, the specific discussion of the Brazilian situation, and the attempt at reading these multifarious aspects through the light of intercultural communication and learning is the result of a theoretical process of reflection on a series of particular and intercultural experiences I have had.

Initially, my professional experience in community centers in several cities in the United States required that I develop closer contact with families where 'private' problems of 'domestic' violence became cases of public intervention. Especially in my work with the Washington Network against Domestic Violence in Olympia, Washington, I was confronted with the extent to which violence appears to permeate gender relationships and how cultural expectations related to female and male behavior influence the social organization of such

relationships within the United States. Consequently the interventions designed to alleviate the problem of violence were based on questioning these expectations and redefining social relationships.

From 1987 to 1991, I carried out research in Brazil on the topic of violence against women, directing my study to the women themselves. My results from an analysis of the interviews I carried out with Brazilian women demonstrated, in accord with the international literature, that violence against women in Brazil is a multi-factorial problem influenced by cultural norms and attitudes regarding women and men and framed by legal, economic, political as well as psychological contingencies. The problem of violence against women, therefore, requires a number of interventions based on the particular and multiple needs of women within the Brazilian context.

One such intervention was the enterprising and groundbreaking proposal of the Brazilian women's movement for women's police stations, staffed solely by policewomen and serving exclusively women and children. However, as I worked closely with the *Delegacia da Defesa da Mulher* em São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, I was also surprised by the Brazilian women's unawareness of their pioneering position, betrayed in their questions: "How many women's police stations are there in the United States?" or even "Does the problem of violence against women exist in the United States?" Further probing into the achievements of the Brazilian women's movement reveals that women's police stations are but one of a number of political strategies aimed at combating violence against women.

Although Brazilian women were quick to identify problems and contradictions in the movement against violence, they had certainly achieved notable successes. Why hadn't I heard of their work before? Why weren't Brazilian women being called in from all over the world to educate other women on the "Brazilian model against violence?" Why weren't Brazilian pamphlets and books related to violence against women being translated into other languages? One could hypothesize that due to the concentrated political activity of the 1980s, Brazilian women were just too busy to stop and write or analyze their situation. Or perhaps what was being written was simply too connected to the Brazilian context to be of use to anyone living outside of Brazil.

By continuing my research in Germany from 1992 to 1997, I had the opportunity to make yet another comparison on how women deal with the problem of violence. Through interviews with women at Agisra, the Feministisches Frauengesundheits Zentrum, the Zentrale Informationsstelle für Autonome Frauenhäuser and Imbradiva among other places, I was able to gain an understanding of how violence against women is interpreted and dealt with in the German context. Although violence against women in Germany is also articulated by women's groups as a social problem, the situation of women and the possible solutions to these problems differ from those in the United States and from those in Brazil. For instance, the social welfare system in Germany offers a much broader net of services and benefits than the welfare systems of the United States or Brazil. Much of the earlier work of the movement against violence in Germany was to widen this net to include women in situations of violence. Although Germany and the United States differ in terms of geographic size, political party system, and numerous other cultural and political norms and practices, the women's movements against violence against women in both countries were preceded by the movement against rape and followed the British initiative of installing women's shelters to house battered women. The Brazilian movement against violence did not precede an anti-rape movement, nor did it become a shelter movement. Finally, the United States and Germany are both positioned as 'first-world' countries in contrast to Brazilian's 'third world' status, which produces a number of assumptions on both sides of the divide.

Thus, in comparing the development of the women's movement in Brazil with that of the United States or Germany, I was often confronted with the 'natural' attempt to measure the level and degree of movement activity by the number of women's shelters in Brazil and a general attitude that men in Brazil were more 'macho,' and thus, more inclined towards violence. How could one explain the development of the women's movement against violence in Brazil so that it could make sense to others? Through my participation in the International Educational program at the University of Frankfurt a.M. under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Dr. Patrick Dias, I have attempted to respond to this question.

I have chosen to concentrate on the specific case of Brazil since the international literature on the Brazilian experience remains minimal and because I consider that the Brazilian movement against violence offers unique perspectives on dealing with violence, which could be relevant to the situation in other countries also. Most importantly, however,

the Brazilian experience is also interconnected with other countries and international groups and it is the reflection on this intercultural interaction that I find most significant.

In presenting this case I first explore the various ways in which the problem of violence against women has been understood, interpreted and articulated. I aim to show that while violence against women is often considered synonymous with 'domestic' violence, it can have public, international and universal aspects. Second, I demonstrate the various theoretical approaches concerning the universal dimension of violence against women and the particular contexts in which it occurs. Third, I take the specific case of the women's movement against violence in Brazil in order to show how the problem of violence against women is interpreted and how actions are taken within the Brazilian context. Finally, I argue that an intercultural perspective could deepen our understanding of violence and broaden our scope of practical interventions by indicating how intercultural interactions have and could influence – have been and could be influenced by – the Brazilian situation.

The first chapter of this study will take the project of intercultural communication as point of departure and concentrate on how violence has been interpreted. Focusing on multiple interpretations of violence against women will bring us to a discussion on diversity among women and the way violence has been shaped by intercultural and international interactions.

The second chapter will concentrate on a discursive model based on Nancy Fraser's Model of Need's Interpretation that has been employed to interpret the women's movement against violence. The model allows us to focus on how violence against women was interpreted within a particular society rather than how a preconceived idea of violence 'fits' into a context. However, to make the model useful for intercultural communication, it needs to be modified to incorporate a contextual study of the differing types of state organizations and components, religious institutions, specific cultural dimensions and relationships, and international influences. The general framework of intercultural communication and learning as articulated by P.V. Dias will guide our approach.

The third chapter will concentrate on the contextual analysis of Brazil. For authentic intercultural communication to occur, an understanding of the historical positioned context is essential. Concepts such as 'state' or 'political' are easily translated from one language to another but could refer to very different dynamics and interrelations. Thus, it is not enough to

merely transfer concepts from one culture to another, but rather attempt to understand what these concepts mean and the consequences they could have within each context.

The fourth chapter traces the development of the Brazilian women's movement against violence, which is based on the contingencies of the specific Brazilian context and intercultural interactions.

Finally, the fifth chapter reviews and makes an analysis of this movement in light of an international perspective and offers some indications of how intercultural dialogue would benefit women's movements against violence.

In conclusion, I consider that intercultural communication is a necessary challenge to women's movements against violence, not only because it stems from my own personal intercultural experience with different institutions that work against violence, but because I see it as enabling us to learn other perspectives and develop practical strategies while becoming conscious of our own limitations and our interconnections with one another. By learning the codes of other cultures and the differing ways of communication, perhaps we can cross cultural boundaries and develop solidarity and cooperation. This study is a contribution in this direction.[1]

[1] This study was based on research that was carried out in several stages. Information on Brazil is based on a literature study and on interviews that I held with women in their homes, in the police stations, and in several women's and community organizations in São Bernardo do Campo, Santo André, and São Paulo from 1987-1991. In July 1997 I carried out a series of interviews with police women, social workers, psychologists and activists in São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo, Santo André, Piracicaba, Campinas and Campo Grande. Interviews were also made with women who worked or had worked in agencies in Acre, Recife, Olinda and Rio de Janeiro. A literature study was also done in July 1997 and complimented by further research while living in Brazil from 1998 to 2001. Information on Germany is based on a literature study and on interviews carried out from 1992 to 1997 primarily in Frankfurt a.M. Marburg, Bruchsal, and Siegen. Information on the United States is based on my professional experience within social service community centers in Chicago IL, Phoenix AZ, and Olympia WA, from 1981-1983; 1985-1987; 1991-1992; and 1997-1998. A literature study was done in the United States for this project from 1997-1998.

CHAPTER 1

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

A UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR PROBLEM

> *There is no theory which accounts for the oppression of women--in its endless variety and monotonous similarity, cross-culturally and throughout history.*
>
> (Rubens 1975)

Violence against women has an extensive and diversified history. A society that has not used physical means to subordinate women appears to be the exception. From witch hunts in Europe to foot-binding in China, and genital mutilation in Africa to wife burning in India, the problem of violence against women transverses time and culture. Today, media reports, police statistics and the testimony of women in various countries signal that this problem still persists and can be characterized, for the most part, as historical and universal.[1] However, the variety of violent methods used against women and the different types of justifications given for such violence also imply that the problem varies from culture to culture and from historical period to historical period. Factors such as the general public opinion on the role of women, cultural norms concerning violence, the level of economic equality between men and women as well as categories such as ethnic background and class position play a part in the degree and type of violence directed against women. That these factors are culturally specific

[1] There is currently a wealth of literature testifying to the existence of violence against women across cultures and throughout history. Some examples are Azevedo 1985; Bernard & Schlaffer 1978; Daly 1978; Davidson, 1977; Dobash & Dobash 1979, 1983; Fleming 1979; Gelles & Cornell 1983; Langley & Levey 1980; Levinson 1989; Miles 1996; Pleck 1987; Schuler 1992; Shah 1990;Walker & Parmar 1993.

implies that violence against women is not only a universal but also a particular problem. Precisely due to these distinctions, culturally specific approaches have been developed in response to the particular character of the violence and the general condition of women in the society. In order to account for these particularities and diverging contexts and at the same time affirm that learning and communication is possible between people from different cultures and situations, an intercultural framework is necessary that will discern both the specificities and the universalities of the context.

In this chapter, I will provide a brief revision of the literature on violence against women focusing on how it has been interpreted primarily as 'domestic' or 'private sphere' violence, while also demonstrating the various ways this violence has been articulated and understood in divergent contexts and by people of conflicting ideological persuasions. This is not meant to be a thorough or complete revision of all the literature on violence against women since this would be quite beyond the scope of this study given the amount of investigation into the subject in the last years. I am cognizant of the fact that the greatest outpouring of current research on this particular topic has come from the United States and Great Britain and the following revision reflects this situation, although attempts have been made to include research from other sources.

My primary objective here is to demonstrate the diversity of interpretations and to present evidence that violence against women can best be understood as multidimensional phenomena within an intercultural perspective. Therefore, rather than attempting to find the most 'correct' interpretation, I will show the *controversies* which have developed and the multiple array of interpretations which have arisen – none of which are complete, none of which explain the phenomena of violence in their "endless variety...cross-culturally and throughout history."

However, this is not meant to be a simple non-critical listing of proposals on violence. Violence against women is taken up as a *problem*, as a factor in women's oppression, which hinders full psychological, social, cultural and political development. Although I will offer a critical analysis of some feminist interpretations of violence, I hold to the feminist position that opposes forms of domination and violence against women. This necessitates an analysis and critique of dominating power structures within society. Thus, this study constitutes an attempt to

better understand the complexity of the problem so that policies can be instituted that could alleviate and eventually eliminate it.

The way in which violence is defined could result in public policies and actions that stop or hinder certain types of violence, could increase our awareness of previously ignored or condoned forms of violence, or could blind us to the suffering of others and to our participation in tolerating unmentioned forms of violence. Thus, how violence is articulated carries political and ideological underpinnings that make further probing into the differing positions that women hold within a multicultural, socially stratified country and world necessary.[2] Finally, I will argue that this multiplicity of interpretations and their political and ideological bases bring to the forefront issues of diversity among women and the challenges of intercultural communication and learning. Thus, I take a feminist and intercultural approach to demonstrated the multidimensional character of violence against women.

Diverging Definitions of *Violence* Against Women

Within the last 25 years the production of literature and scientific material on the subject of violence against women has grown immensely. Although it has been acknowledged that violence transverses culture, race and class categories, much of the material still deals with violence as a universal phenomenon and gives less emphasis to the culturally specific interpretation of this violence. More often than not, predefined ideas about violence are used to measure the level of violence rather than understand the specific cultural aspects of that violence. Broad universal theories such as patriarchy, female masochism or 'macho' mentality have been used to explain and describe very diverse contexts. Even such notions as public and private, which have been used to qualify violence, are admittedly problematic. Surely there are differences in what constitutes private or public spheres within the Amerindian Juruna village in west-central Brazil as compared to a densely populated, highly urbanized metropolitan center such as São Paulo. When we use words such as 'private' or 'domestic' within this text we do so

[2] The importance of language and discourse in molding our thoughts and practices was elucidated by Michel Foucault in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972); *The History of Sexuality* (1978); *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). This study, by incorporating a discursive analysis, takes into consideration his contribution.

with the understanding that they are not static universal categories but have been shown to change and waiver along cultural, racial, class and gender lines.[3]

Violence against women in the private sphere goes by many names. Within the English language alone the following terms are but a few examples of how violence is differentially articulated: 'domestic violence,' 'family violence,' 'intimate violence,' 'wife-beating,' 'spouse-abuse,' 'wife-abuse,' and 'battering.' The first three terms refer to a wide range of types of violence (physical, emotional, or sexual) that occur between family members or between partners or friends, although most often physical injury is implied. These words affirm the specificity of violence that occurs within the confines of the family or private relationships in contrast to that violence which occurs between strangers or adversaries. 'Wife-beating,' 'spouse-abuse' and 'wife-abuse' specify violence or abusive tactics between marital partners with 'wife' replacing 'spouse' in order to emphasize that the woman is most often the injured party of violence between spouses. 'Abuse' often refers to physical injury, but can also signify general mistreatment on an emotional, sexual or economic level or neglect of dependent persons. 'Beating' and 'battering' indicate severe physical violence with 'battering' carrying additional juridical (criminal) connotations. Within the recent English-language literature, 'battering' has come to include a wide set of behaviors employed to physically injure, intimidate, manipulate, isolate, control and humiliate an intimate partner.[4]

This differentiation is certainly not limited to the English language. For instance, German feminists use the word *Misshandlung* which is a juridical term best translated as 'mistreatment' directed against children, the elderly, the disabled, or women by men or adults in a superior physical position. They also use the term *Männergewalt* (male violence) which makes specific reference to violence employed by men, infers that violence coming from men is of a specific type or, more radically, that violence is inherently male. German feminists tend not to use the term *häusliche Gewalt* (domestic violence) because they view violence directed towards

[3] For a feminist interpretation of private and public see: Fraser's critique of Habermas (1989) and her article on the Anita Hill/ Clarence Thomas proceedings (1997); Eshtain 1981 for a critique of the historical construction and feminist analyses of private/public divisions; and Fineman and Mykitiuk (eds.) 1994 for a series of articles on the relationship between domestic violence and the private/public divide.

[4] Within the context of the United States, the change from the use of the term domestic violence to woman battering was significant because it differentiated the specific experiences and needs of adult women from those of children, elderly or disabled family members who could also suffer violence. It also eliminates any allusion

women by their husbands or partners or violence against children and the elderly as originating in the hierarchical structures of society outside the domestic realm (personal communication with Ilse Lichtenthäler at the Zentrale Informationsstelle für Autonome Frauenhäuser, May, 1997). In South America, the Brazilian *mulheres espancadas* and the Spanish term *mujeres golpeadas* highlight the brutality of the violence directed against women and were employed to gain the attention of the public for a previously hidden problem (Azevedo 1985; Zambrano 1985). These are just a few examples of how language directs attention to particular aspects of violence and is conditioned by the cultural context and the political persuasion or ideology of the articulators.

The definitions and the justifications given for violence against women also vary according to context and historical period. Physical punishment or even death inflicted by a husband on his wife has been interpreted at certain times and places as legitimate forms of 'discipline' or as a just consequence for feminine behavior rather than as forms of abusive violence. As a necessary discipline it was often enshrined in legal or religious documents. An ancient example is the Code of Hammurabi which decrees that a woman who talks against her husband should have her name engraved on a brick which would then be used to break her teeth (cited in Fleming 1975). Texts from the European Middle Ages instructed men to beat their wives when they were unfaithful, disagreed with him or questioned his authority. Husbands were instructed to beat their wayward wives not out of anger but out of concern that the beating would have its proposed effect of doing the wife some good (cited in Bernard & Schlaffer 1978). The custom of 'knocking some sense into her' was also applied in the United States where up until the late 19th century laws were passed that allowed men to beat their wives "with moderation" (cited Langley & Levy 1980). In Brazil men have traditionally used the 'honor defense' to exonerate themselves from the murder of an unfaithful wife and her lover by arguing that their violent act was a defensive reaction against the offensive attack on their honor (America's Watch 1991; Aragão 1980; Corrêa 1981; 1983).

Some current international studies on police perspectives on domestic violence demonstrate that the police internalize certain ideological constructs regarding woman and

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to the problem being defined as private or domestic. See E.Stark and A. Flitcraft 1996 and Schechter 1982 for a discussion on the ramifications of these terms.

men in order to explain the ‘domestic disturbance.’ Police have reported that women have deserved violent ‘retaliations’ because they failed to adhere to the traditional gender roles of good mother and housewife or because they provoked the man. Others have considered domestic violence to be a normal feature of marital relationships in which law enforcement should not intervene (Hanmer, Radford & Stanko 1989). Along the same lines, Mushanga (1983), in "Wife Victimization in East and Central Africa", discusses how the convergence of traditional and modern views about women may cause women to directly or indirectly put themselves in dangerous situations. She argues that some women may create conditions to facilitate battering by using offensive or provocative language, by practicing sexual infidelity, or by questioning their traditional role as women.

While laws, religious documents, oral reports of traditional practices, and written interviews have provided interesting insights into the various ways in which domestic violence has been interpreted and dealt with over time, they are not our only source. Academic experts from various fields of study have come up with a wide spectrum of explanations. Freud (1933) and Deutsch (1944) developed theories concerning women’s innate masochism, which was later referred to by psychologists to explain how women provoked or expected violence from their husbands or partners. Other women psychologists questioned the essentialist character of feminine masochism and proposed sociological explanations for it. Horney (1937) held that in societies where women are economically and emotionally dependent on men, they are more apt to suffer from low self-esteem and expect suffering and punishment. Shainess (1985) considered masochism to be a culturally determined process whereby women through socialization become vulnerable, passive, insecure and fearful. Brückner (1993) holds that violence against women and girls is more than just an individual act of one man over one women but rather a societal and cultural condition whose roots can be found deep within gender relations in the socialized images of masculinity and femininity. Other psychologist have attempted to explain women’s behavior using theoretical concepts such as "traumatic bonding" (Dutton 1988) or "learned helplessness" (Walker 1979).

Thus, violence against women has been interpreted as necessary disciplinary action, as just retaliation against women’s provocations or offenses, as a means to retain honor, as an

expected feature of marital relationships, as a result of feminine masochism or innate characteristics of feminine psychology, or as the result of socialization. These are a few examples of perspectives on violence against women that focus primarily on women's behavior.

On the other hand, many social scientists have dismissed the idea that the victim of violence should be the focus of research. They argue that the cause of violence against women can be found in the societal structures or in men themselves. The radical feminist movement of the late 1970s in the United States and Europe developed theories using ontological arguments identifying men as the innate oppressors of women. Daly (1978) requires that women become lesbians lest they allow men to define and control their bodies and minds. Brownmiller (1975) writes:

> Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times...I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear (p.5).

Some theorists contend that violence against women should be understood as a form of terrorism employed by men to manipulate their female partners (Marcus 1994; Beasley & Thomas 1994). Such theories pose a strict dichotomy between oppressive males and victimized females.[5]

Dobash & Dobash (1983) make the case that violence against women must be seen in the context of patriarchal marriage directing emphasis from the male sex to the structures of society:

> We prefer to see violence used by men against women in the family as attempts to establish or maintain a patriarchal social order. Violence is used by men to chastise their wives for real or perceived transgression of his authority and as attempts to reaffirm and maintain a hierarchical and moral order within the family (p.150).

[5] Such radical feminist views have since come under attack from other feminists who argue that their essentialist arguments, which vilify men and make victims of all women, are very close to arguments that defend the subjugation of women based on innate feminine passive and domestic nature. They also criticize the universal victimization of women, which does not take into account conditions such as class or race. See Elshtain 1981; hooks 1984; Lorde 1984 for a critique of white radical feminist views.

Aragão (1980) in analyzing the murder of women by their partners in "Mediterranean societies" cites cultural and religious preconditions. He theorizes that the murder of women accused of adultery functions as a form of sacrifice that alleviates impurities that supposedly threaten the viability of social systems. Mies and Shiva (1993) consider violence against women to be a result of the prevailing culture of violence also expressed in violence against nature and between nation states. Along these same lines, Levinson & Malone (1980) suggest that violence in families is related to the overall level of violence in the society. Some proponents of social learning theory show evidence of intergenerational transmission of family violence, whereby children learn to be violent by witnessing it among family members or by experiencing it directly (Kalmuss 1984; Pagelow 1981; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz 1980; Ulbrich & Huber 1981; Egeland 1993).

However, psychologists working with male abusers have noted that broad sociological theories regarding male socialization and cultural violence do not explain why some men within the same culture are violent towards their partners while others are not. Since mild forms of violence such as pushing or slapping appear to be common within marital relationships in the United States, O'Leary (1993) argues that personality disorders can predict severe spouse abuse. The link between alcohol and drug use with violent behavior has produced controversy, with some researchers holding that alcohol and drug use is a causal element (Flanzer 1993) while others insist that it is one of many associative element in a complicated set of psychological, social and contextual factors (Gelles 1993).

Most researchers today recognize that violence against women has a multiple array of causes. Straus (1973) incorporates a large part of the theories about domestic violence in a multivariable system in which violence is considered a product of various antecedents: high level of conflict inherent in the family; high level of violence in the society; socialization of violence in the family; violence integrated into the personality and behavioral 'scripts'; cultural norms legitimizing violence between family members; sexist organization of the society and its family system; tolerance of violence by women. Godenzi (1993) makes an overall examination of causes which include gender inequalities, economic inequalities, acceptance of violence as a norm, and prevention strategies, such as level of social

networking, awareness of the problem and preventative education as important factors in the consideration of violence against women.

Levinson (1989) has made a cross-cultural analysis of wife-beating and theorizes that, although wife-beating occurs in more societies than any other form of family violence and although it is perhaps the most common form of violence against women, it is not a unidimensional phenomenon. His is one of the few studies that takes into account the interpretations given by members of each society. By analyzing the data from 90 societies, he finds three reasons why people around the world believe that wife beating occurs or should occur. First, some people believe that wife beating is a result of sexual jealousy caused by real or suspected adultery by the wife. Second, people believe wife-beating is inflicted because the husband had good reason to do it. These good reasons vary according to the society but are commonly understood by both men and women of the society and usually have to do with the wife's failure to perform her duties or show her husband the respect he awaits. The third predominate type is wife beating at will, that is, people within the society believe that the husband has the right to beat his wife for any reason or for no reason at all. Finally Levinson adds one more less cited type which is alcohol-induced wife beating. According to his data, in a few societies, alcohol is a key factor in leading up to the wife-beating incident and the violence is tolerated by the wife, family and community due to the supposed disinhibiting effects of alcohol.

Levinson goes on to report that the frequency of wife beating appears to be correlated to the wife's inferior economic status, male dominance in family decisions, restriction on female divorce freedom and use of violent conflict resolution. A variety of informal and formal mechanisms are used to control wife-beating depending on sociocultural factors. The most effective seems to be immediate protection for the wife. After-the-fact protection in which the wife must await a public hearing or judicial order do not seem to prevent wife beating within the sample taken. The factors that predict the frequency of wife beating also seem to explain why there is delayed use of interventions. Levinson reasons that in a society where the husband dominates the family, where women have little economic power, where divorce is difficult to obtain, or where disputes are often resolved in a violent manner, battered wives have more difficulty in receiving outside help. Tertiary interventions appear to be helpful only when

coupled with approaches that focus on key factors such as economic equity and egalitarian home relationships. In 15 of the 90 societies studied, family violence was rare or absent. The results of Levinson's study are preliminary and subject to revision pending future cross-cultural studies. The importance of this study is that it provides empirical evidence of the multidimensional nature of domestic violence and takes into account the interpretations given by people within differing contexts.

The above sampling from the literature on violence against women illustrates that there is an array of legal, religious, sociological and psychological interpretations of violence against women, many of which are conflicting. The manner in which violence against women is perceived and understood depends not only on the character of the violence and the particular social context, but also on the ideological or social position of the researcher. Likewise there have been a large range of interventions designed to solve or alleviate the problem, which are wrapped around particular interpretations of violence and consequently are prone to controversy. If defined as a women's health problem, interventions are posed in medical/clinical terms (Stark & Flitcraft 1996); if understood as a legal or criminal problem, legislation and policing strategies are recommended (Buzawa & Buzawa 1996; Hanmer Radford & Stanko 1989); if positioned within the theory of male dominance and female subjugation, women's autonomy and independence become focal issues and separation and divorce are often implicitly encouraged (NiCarthy 1982; Walker, L 1979); if understood as a communication problem, couple therapy becomes the answer (Paul & Paul 1983); if posited as a social problem, political and educational policies are key (Schechter 1982); if interpreted as an alcohol and drug problem, recovery centers are of primary importance (Flanzer 1993). Gelles and Loseke's book entitled *Current Controversies on Family Violence* (1993) likened the "family violence experts" to a dysfunctional family unable to work together due to the "immediate, practical, political, emotionally charged, and ultimately moral" character of the issues at hand (p.xvi). If we can arrive at any conclusions regarding all of this, it is that violence against women appears to be a grouping of complex multidimensional phenomena.

However, these explanations occurred within a particular context where the issue of violence against women was considered a legitimate area of discussion. The tendency for psychologists to take a more individualistic approach to violence while sociologists search for

explanations involving the social structures of society seems obvious enough, but it does not account for the fact that from 1939 to 1969 in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* neither psychologists nor sociologists made any reference to violence in the family, a phenomenon that Straus (introduction to Gelles 1974) denotes as "selective inattention." Why, we could ask, was violence against women not considered a topic for research in the United States during this time? What were the social conditions that hindered such public discussion? And why has there been such an explosion of books, articles and materials on the subject of domestic violence in the last 30 years? Therefore, there is a need to look for the internal workings of a particular context, to understand the social and political conditions which make discussions concerning violence against women possible, how this violence is then interpreted and approached by different groups within that context. While some forms of violence against women gain public attention, other forms may remain obscured.

Not only do researchers differ on the theories developed to explain the causes for violence against women, they also differ in their attempts to interpret historical reasons for discussing and approaching the issue of violence against women. Azevedo (1985), in making an analysis of the laws and customs concerning domestic violence against women on the international level and historically, delineates four phases of interpretation. In the first phase, domestic violence is considered normal and necessary and is officially accepted; in the second phase, brutal violence is considered to be inhuman and laws are set to moderate the abuses; in the third phase, domestic violence is understood to be a crime punishable by law; finally, domestic violence is not only condemned officially but also socially and is seen as a social problem.

However, others have argued that the subjugation of women has not followed a clear linear model, that there have been historic periods in specific places where women have enjoyed relative freedom from male domination only to witness processes which later reduced their political and personal powers. For instance many anthropologists and historians hold that women enjoyed more social and political power in ancient than in modern time (d'Eaubonne 1977; Reincourt 1974). More concrete proof of a non-linear model of emancipation can be found in the 20th century. Women in Germany saw many of their rights, which they had gained during the Weimar Republic, cast away as National Socialism gained

control (Gerhard 1980). Many Iranian women would agree that they, as well, experienced a setback in their formal freedoms with the installation of a religious fundamentalist regime. Steady (1993) reports from her field work in the Sande society in West Africa that modern law enforcement institutions were far less effective than the traditional female collective sanctions in controlling domestic violence:

> Many women complained to me that the control of domestic violence through traditional forms of women's collective action, which in the rural areas involved tying the culprit's hands and feet and letting him roll down a rocky hill, was no longer possible in the urban areas. Rather, in extreme cases women migrants in the city had to resort to the impersonal, ineffective and patriarchally oriented system of law enforcement (pp. 92-93).

Elizabeth Pleck (1987) traces the waxing and waning of political activity around the issue of family violence in the United States. Her historical research shows that there were previous periods in American history where family violence became an issue of public discussion and policy: from 1640 to 1680 when Puritans in Massachusetts enacted laws against wife beating and child abuse; and from 1874 to 1890 when societies against cruelty to children and efforts against wife battering were initiated. Radical feminists "rediscovered" wife battering in the mid-1970s but only after working on such areas as abortion and rape. Pleck (1987) theorizes that although there appeared to be more cases of wife battery than rape, the latter fit into the radical feminist ideology of male domination over female sexuality more than did wife battery and was, therefore, more congruent with radical feminist goals. Thus, Pleck asserts that dominant ideologies shape not only our interpretations of violence but also whether or not we are able to see the violence and that such perspectives change according to historical context.

Therefore, although there may appear to be a progressive development toward women's emancipation in some countries, this cannot be considered the rule. There is enough evidence to disprove any existence of a unitary status that can be used to measure women's conditions over time or cross-culturally.[6] When we delve into the cross-cultural study of violence against

[6] For arguments against a general status of women see: M.Whyte, 1978; M. Rosaldo 1980; N. Quinn, 1977. For a critique on the concepts of progress and development see P.V. Dias (in print).

women, questions of perception and interpretation intensify. Gelles (1983) articulates some misgivings in regards to the explanations given for family violence across cultures:

> Although it may be tempting to point out the similarities in factors related to family violence around the world, one must consider that these similarities can arise because researchers in other countries rely on their reading of the extensive literature on family violence in the United States to frame both their thinking and their research (p. 161).

I initially began this section by focusing on 'intimate violence' or 'violence in the private sphere.' In the United States and Europe although the movement against rape preceded that of the movement against domestic violence, the concept of violence against women came to be understood as being almost synonymous with violence against women by their male partners within the domestic sphere (Pleck 1987; Schechter 1982). However, as women have analyzed their condition of subordination they have noted other constitutive factors in their understanding and experience of violence. Sexual harassment, for instance, often defined as a form of violence against women could not be considered a domestic problem since it has been identified primarily in the workplace, although it had up until recently been considered a 'private' matter between men and women.

Moreover, there are a number of perspectives on violence against women that interpret it in relation to intercultural and international contacts in conjunction with exploitation, militarization, racism and ethnocentrism. 'Third world' women and women of color have asserted that violence against women must be understood in its particularity and in relationship to other forms of abuse and exploitation on an intercultural and international scale. Likewise women argued that exploitive practices carried out by both men and women have seriously hindered the living situations of women workers, third world women and women of color in 'first world' countries (Mies & Shiva 1993).

That violence against women can be linked to issues such as imperialism, racism or militarization implicates many women as contributing and supporting such violence, and it can mean the some women may consider other women to be responsible for the violence they suffer. Thus early feminist theories that deposit almost total blame on men for violence without analyzing the multiple factors and the diversity of situations that women experience

fall short in their explanatory power. Likewise, the interpretation of violence against women also depends on the position of women within a particular context. This brings us to the discussion of the recent feminist debate on diversity.

Diversity in the Understanding of *Women*

That there is considerable evidence to demonstrate that women occupy inferior positions in almost all countries around the world has provided the basis for feminists to claim a common identity among women. However, it has been argued that the category 'woman' has been modeled on the white, middle-class, eurocentric model, quite divorced from the experience of third world women. Chandra Mohanty (1988), for example, unveils some of the colonizing elements of western feminism by showing how sexual difference is considered within a singular view of male dominance without taking into consideration other factors and contexts of subordination. Women belong to classes and nations that dominate and exploit others and they enjoy privileges in terms of access to resources that are denied to other women. The assumption, therefore, that people of the same gender, across class, culture, race, ethnic identity, sexual preference and so on could constitute a homogeneous group and form an international constituency or a 'sisterhood' has been seriously questioned (Mohanty 1988; hooks 1984; Anzaldua 1990; Goetz 1991).

Even western feminism can hardly be described as a monolithic, unified movement or theory. Present day feminisms claim a wide array of philosophical roots, espouse often-conflicting lines of action, and enjoy varying degrees of recognition and political clout. 'Western' women may align themselves with any of a number of feminist theories. They can take their pick from the likes of liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, ecological, anarchist, phenomenological, poststructuralist, standpoint, and postmodern feminism. Even within these categories we find divergent views which, in the same token, are not mutually exclusive. Firestone (1972) who is often cited as a radical feminist borrowed heavily from psychoanalysis and Marxism. Luce Irigaray (1985[a] ;1985b) a French postmodern feminist makes specific references to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. In fact, it would be difficult to find a 'pure' type among the categories.

Many ‘non-western’ women have often identified themselves with one or more of the above categories of feminism, signifying that this typology is not exclusively ‘western,’ and that ‘non-western’ women also hold divergent views. Many third world feminists have adopted Marxist categories to analyze the structural questions of class, capitalism, and imperialism on gender (see Saffioti 1976 as an example). Shiva (1988) has developed an ecological approach to analyze the relationship between destruction of the environment by national and international bodies and women’s traditional role as life-producers and nurturers. DAWN has adapted standpoint feminist theory to argue that it is from the vantage point of the oppressed that strategies should be devised (Sen & Grown 1987). Parpart & Marchand (1995) present a series of approaches to postmodernism by third world feminists who discuss the advantages and disadvantages of postmodern thought within their particular context.

Nonetheless, it would not be fair to claim a mere plurality of feminist views around the world nor can we deny that many of the above theories have universalistic totalizing pretensions. As stated earlier, some feminist theories and practices have held more influence among policymakers than others. The dominant, European/US-American feminist discourses about women and development have reserved the right to define the categories used such as ‘woman,’ ‘first’ and ‘third’ world, ‘development’ and ‘progress’ and have thus controlled the tone of the discussion and the conception of programs. Policies and projects that came out of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85) were based on the concern about the effects of modernization on the subordination of women especially within ‘developing’ countries. As these policies unfolded they were met by the objections of third world women who questioned the underlying motives and related western feminism to imperialism. Third world women have argued that these programs do not meet the survival needs of women in developing countries (Kabeer 1994; Minh-ha 1987; Goetz 1991).

More often than not, international and intercultural contacts have been marked by power plays and hierarchical relationships of domination and submission, typified by the north/south dichotomy of wealthy versus poor and exemplified by colonization and slave trade, ideological and religious oppression, expropriation of natural resources, capitalistic exploitation, as well as ideological control through aid to developing countries. Postcolonial feminists and women of color have argued that these issues must be included if feminism is

to have any global significance, and they have made a number of demands on feminist theory and praxis.

One of their principle claims is that issues such as race, class, and gender be considered as simultaneous forms of oppression, meaning that feminists should not privilege gender oppression as the main, 'primal' form of oppression that can be isolated from other forms of oppression (Brewer 1993; Hull et. al. 1982; hooks 1984). By isolating gender from class and race the term 'women' became synonymous with northern white women of class privilege. Anzaldua (1990) writes:

> When asked what I am, I never say I'm a woman. I say I am a Chicana, a mestiza, a *mexicana*, or I am a woman-of-color – which is different from 'woman' (which always means white woman)... for me a woman-of-color is not just a 'woman'; she carries the markings of her race, she is a gendered racial being – not just a gendered being (p.221).

Theorizing about race, class, and gender is not simply a matter of complementing gender studies with insights concerning other social issues but developing an interactive framework of organization in which these issues are "historicized and contextualized" in order to gain an understanding of the "embeddedness and relationality of race, class and gender and the multiplicative nature of these relationships" (Brewer 1993, p.16). Although race, class and gender constitute the three major categories feminists have focused on in the analysis of oppression, an interactive framework allows for the analysis of other forms of oppression as they are identified by women. Some feminists have pointed out how 'woman' is most often understood only in relationship to heterosexual relationships with men (Butler 1993; Rich 1980) and have discussed the shifting identities women of color experience in the overlapping of sexual preference with racial identity (Smith 1983; Moraga & Anzaldua 1983; Anzaldua 1990). Postcolonial women have underscored the importance of discussing imperialism, colonialism and militarization (Sen & Grown 1987; Kabeer 1994; Beckman & d'Amico 1994; Rai & Lievesley 1996). Often postcolonial women find themselves in difficult situations due to their feminist and nationalist loyalties and until feminism is

understood in its multiplicity these problems will continue to exist. The need for a broader basis by which to talk about women's oppression is articulated by Sen & Grown (1987):

> Throughout the Decade they [third world women] have faced accusations from two sides: from those who dismiss them as not being truly 'feminist' because of their unwillingness to separate the struggle against gender subordination from that against other oppression, and from those who accuse them of dividing class or national struggles and sometimes of uncritically following women's liberation movements imported from outside. This is why we strongly affirm that feminism strives for the broadest and the deepest development of society and human beings free of *all* systems of domination. (p. 19)

In the analysis of these relationships it is clear that women hold differing positions of power and privilege. The tendency by some feminists to universalize women's victimization has disguised how women have contributed to the exploitation and oppression of other women by putting the blame on men only. It could also be understood as a form of exploitation. Kappeler (1995) argues that claiming collective victimization for ones personal identity is to exploit the real situation of abuse by using it for ones advantage. Hooks (1984) argues that identification as victim is a reflection of male supremacist thinking:

> Sexist ideology teaches women that to be female is to be a victim. Rather than repudiate this equation (which mystifies female experience--in their daily lives most women are not continually passive, helpless, or powerless 'victims'), women's liberationists embraced it, making shared victimization the basis for woman bonding. (...) Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. (...) It would be psychologically demoralizing for these women to bond with other women on the basis of shared victimization. They bond with other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources. This is the woman bonding feminist movement should encourage (p. 45).

Rather than universal victimization, many postcolonial women and women of color have proposed the concept of empowerment coupled with political activism. Sharing strengths and resources to work against all forms of oppression so women may gain power to make choices in their lives is a basic concept of empowerment and is accomplished through praxis. They have stressed activism as the major component of feminism, which they understand to be a political movement to make positive concrete changes in women's lives. It

is oriented towards improving the situation for the largest number of women in the society (hooks 1984; Sen & Grown 1987). Methods and strategies should come out of the direct experience of women within a particular context. However, close to the concept of empowerment is the emphasis on the interests of the most disenfranchised groups of society because it is understood that they suffer the most from the various forms of oppression (Sen & Grown 1987; Shiva 1988). Determining what poor women need, is according to the concept of empowerment, up to the women themselves to decide. In analyzing the policies of non-governmental agencies in third world countries Kabeer (1994) argues that there needs to be an organizational commitment to strengthening poor women's ability to mobilize around their self-defined interests and develop their own agendas instead of merely implementing predetermined interventions. She states that when women were given the space through participatory processes to identify their own needs and shape their agendas a different set of needs would often appear from those previously conceived.

Another important factor in empowerment is mobilization and coalition building. Since it is understood that women have diverse interests and needs, feminists recognize the development of various feminisms in accord with the context and issues facing them. Nonetheless, women are discovering they need to combine efforts in order to gain power – be it political, social, economic or cultural. Coalition building is a strategy for survival based on an urgent political project rather than some notion based on a utopian sisterhood. Postcolonial feminists who experience exploitation both nationally and internationally are particularly aware of the needs for coalition building:

> Two-Thirds World feminists are subject to both antifeminst charges of being foreign dominated and to the actual limitations of some narrow Western feminism. They experience the tensions between autonomy and solidarity constantly and immediately. At the same time, their more exploited position internationally means they understand both the difficulty and the necessity of working across the North-South divide more clearly and more urgently than many of us yet do in the North. For both these reasons Third World feminists commitment to the double project of building indigenous as well as international feminism is explicit and articulate. Their understanding of the creative possibilities of the tension between the two is often more developed and their practice more conscious of that tension than is generally the case in North America (Miles 1997, p. 97).

There are other reasons to be gained for building coalitions beyond the most urgent political needs. Dialogue across diversity has the potential of broadening understanding in order to see the cultural limits of one's viewpoint, of sharing creative strategies, of challenging stereotypes, and developing international awareness. Anzaldua (1990) writes of the work of alliance building as being "in collusion, in coalition, in collision":

> Alliance work is the attempt to shift positions, change positions, reposition ourselves regarding our individual and collective identities. In alliance we are confronted with the problem of how we share or don't share space, how we can position ourselves with individuals or groups who are different from and at odds with each other, how can we reconcile one's love for diverse groups when members of these groups do not love each other, cannot relate to each other, and don't know how to work together. (p. 219)

Obviously, coalition work is not an easy task given the diversity of the women involved, the historical context of colonization and imperialism, problems of racism, ethnocentrism, classism and homophobia, cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings, and the various theoretical and practical positions one can adopt on the subject of feminism and on the particular subject at hand (such as we have seen with the issue of violence against women). There are many questions that still need to be resolved. On what basis are women to come together? What language should they speak? Who should speak? How will the ground rules for organization be adopted? How can women be respectful of differences but still organize effectively?

The universalism of western feminism has been attacked by third world women and women of color because of its totalitarian tendencies. The current debate on diversity has resulted in the development of theories which bring to light totalitarian tendencies within universal theories and which value the diversity of perspectives on the very definition and understanding of women. This debate has provided interesting insights to the construction of knowledge and the development of 'normative' standards and many feminists have shed notions of grandiose monocausal conceptions of oppression and diverted their attention to theories which emphasize diversity, context and specificity. However, the debate is far from over and the questions listed above have yet to be adequately answered. What we have is the

proliferation of many creative attempts to deal with the multifaceted issues and the search for theories and praxis which would facilitate cooperation and understanding.

In response to the problems encountered with generalizing theories of female oppression, post-modernists (Butler, 1993; Irigaray, 1985a, 1985b; Kristeva, 1981; Spivak, 1987) apply poststructuralist theory to question the very existence of the category 'women.' In their critique of western foundationalism, they show how knowledge is constructed and mediated by location and sociopolitical organization. They argue that the female sex is a social construct within a patriarchal framework. Postmodernists has offered useful tools to deconstruct the totalizing assumptions of modern normative theory based on a white western model, however, they fail to provide an adequate structure to analyze the real situation of women struggling for survival. Some feminists have held up the subjectivity of experience as the basis for theory but sometimes to such an extent that women can claim to know only about their immediate situation with a culturally relativist result. This way of theorizing about variation and diversity among women produces an array of particularities rigidly set apart that makes it difficult for feminists to find a common basis for criticism or a viable claim that can penetrate oppressive power structures.

Feminists, therefore, have had to grapple with the question of how to mediate totalizing assumptions and relativistic tendencies. Goetz (1991) suggests an alternative of "partial knowing" (which she takes from Haraway, 1988) with the development of cross-cultural coalitions. She writes:

> The transition from the closed version of 'women' to open exchange with other versions requires that we self-consciously place in the foreground those locations from which we claim to know, remaining all the while acutely aware of our partiality. It is not enough for us to choose our own names which others cannot pronounce. We have to agree to a process of mutual naming, a process which will forbid the romanticization of partial perspectives, and which may help some of us see where we collude in the oppression of other women (pp. 150-151).

Goetz continues by outlining how women can gauge the truth of competing claims. First, there must be a "rigorous materialist analysis to point to the consequences and inter-relations of different sites of oppression" and secondly there has to be the acknowledgment that knowledge is "partial, situated and local...open to revision" (p.151). Goetz is one among a growing number

of theorists and activists who are attempting to find ways for women to learn and communicate cross-culturally. In discussing the problem of violence against women we need an approach that recognizes the diversity in the understanding of women and their experiences, but does not see these issues in isolation. Rather, we need to search for common points and interconnections that would be helpful in addressing the multiple experiences of violence that affect women.

Diversity in Women's Experiences of Violence in Light of Intercultural Communication

Today, cultures cannot be viewed in isolation. 'Globalization' and 'multiculturalism' have become fashionable terms in the description of our present-day world, whether they are used in scientific journals, in advertising, or as political or economic discourses. Although the questions of how people from different cultures relate to one another, how they become interconnected through economic and political means, and what this means for the preservation or development of these cultures have been discussed and disputed, it appears, since the time people began forming social groups, they are very pertinent questions for this age. Today, more than ever, we are affected by changes and decisions made in other parts of the world. Even within a particular nation state the discussion of multiculturalism has brought to light the separate constituencies and conflicting identities between people of the same nationality.

In concluding this chapter I shall argue that even such a particular problem as *domestic* violence could be seen and analyzed within the perspective of intercultural and international learning and communication with the effect of revealing a universal concern and broadening the concept of violence against women beyond the limits of the home. This perspective will demonstrate how cultural stereotypes and ethnocentrism, international economic and political agreements can effect how people perceive and understand violence.

The issue, for example, of interracial conflicts within a multicultural society cannot be ignored in the discussion of violence against women. Bell hooks (1990) notes that the sexism of black men within the United States is often considered to be "a special brand of social disorder, more dangerous, more abhorrent and life threatening than the sexism that pervades the culture as a whole, or the sexism that informs white male domination of women" (p. 62). There are statistics to back up her claim. Schechter (1982) points out that by 1975, 455 men had been

executed in the United States for rape, of these, 405 were black. No man had ever been executed for raping a black woman. Shechter concludes that laws governing rape in the United States have acted primarily as methods of controlling and terrorizing black men. The history of brutal violence enacted against black men in the name of protecting white women and propagated by the myth of perverse black male sexuality, complicates the situation of black women seeking an end to violence. The number of reported rapes of black women is almost three times that of white women (US Department of Justice, 1991 cited in Barbee & Little 1993) yet, the sexual violence of black men against black women continues to be discussed in terms of black male low self-esteem, frustration and feelings of rejection rather than in terms of sexism, premeditation and male responsibility (Barbee & Little 1993). During the time that literature on the subject of battered women was proliferating (1967-1987) in the United States, researchers found only two sources that dealt with the topic of African-American women and battering (Coley & Becket 1988 cited in Barbie & Little 1993). These statistics give the impression that white males are not perpetrators of sexual violence against either white or black women. However, the title of the book *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave* edited by G.T. Hull, P. Bell-Scott and B. Smith (1982) succinctly elucidates how these racial and gender constructs have been distorted by leaving black women out of the definitions. This distortion has resulted in the perception within the United States of rape as primarily a black male on white female phenomenon while discrediting violence against black women.

In the United States, many of the discussions and debates that revolved around the trial of O.J. Simpson accused of murdering his wife and her partner and the proceedings based on Anita Hill's accusations of sexual misconduct by supreme court nominee Clarence Thomas exposed the inability of many US-Americans to critically reflect the complexities of the politics of race and gender.[7] Nellie Mckay (1993) writes of the complexities in regards to the Hill/Thomas proceedings:

[7] O.J. Simpson was a famous African American football star, turned sports announcer and actor who was accused of murdering his wife. The murder trail became a national spectacle as it was televised in its entirety for almost a year. The jury found Simpson not guilty largely due to the ability of his attorneys to instill doubt on the veracity of the police reports and testimonies by demonstrating the blatant racist attitudes of the Los Angeles police. The 1991 Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, a conservative black attorney who had worked as head of the Equal Employment Opportunity

> (...) too many white feminists seemed to have overlooked one very important aspect of the case. In a rare triumphant moment of almost universal gender awareness, these women forgot that for Black women, issues of gender are always connected to race, that the two are inseparable...Certainly Thomas's cry of rage that race was a major factor in the hearings was justified. But he was categorically wrong to suggest that the racial politics in the proceedings was a result of Anita Hill's allegations. He was also correct in naming black male sexuality as the other part of the duo... At the same time, I despise Clarence Thomas for using Anita Hill as the means to reach back for the blackness he spent forty-three years avoiding... In short, Clarence Thomas resorted to the worst display of racial politics in exchange for the power he craved.... Yet too many well-meaning white feminists did not understand or appreciate the complexities of the situation they witnessed on their television screens. (pp. 276-277)

The proceedings shed light on the structures that orient and skew perceptions of violence and race. It is evident that we cannot discuss the full implications of violence against women in a culture which holds black men to be particularly violent and sex crazed, ignores the violence against black women, and continues to consider racism and violence against women as two separate issues or ignores racism all together.

Another case in point is the legal situation of battered immigrant women in Germany that has raised questions within the battered women's movement concerning national immigrant policies and ethnocentric attitudes towards foreigners. Wives of guest workers fear deportation if they separate from their husbands due to their 'family' immigrant status. Attempts to change immigration law to give women independent status have been unsuccessful thus far.[8] However social workers have noted that those foreign women who

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Commission also became a national spectacle as reports of his sexual harassment of a black subordinate, Anita Hill were leaked to the press. After a series of televised hearings on the sexual-harassment accusations, Thomas was confirmed as associate justice of the Supreme Court by a narrow margin.

[8] A slightly different problem was debated in the United States concerning immigrant women who were married to citizens or permanent residents. The Marriage Fraud Amendments of the 1986 Immigration Act in the United States requires that a person who immigrated to the United States in order to marry a citizen or permanent resident must remain married for two years before applying for permanent resident status. Although the amendments provided a waiver if the alien spouse could demonstrate that deportation would result in extreme hardship, or that the marriage was terminated for good cause, the terms of the waiver had not adequately protect battered spouses. Many immigrant women were left with the choice of living with their batterers or deportation. (See 8 U.S.C. +s 1186a 1988; Crenshaw 1994, p. 96, 116) Due to pressure put on Congress the Immigration Act of 1990 was passed with a provision which waivers the marriage fraud rules in cases of domestic violence. However, immigrant women often lack access to resources that could offer support and evidence required for a waiver and they often are not informed of their rights or legal status. Also, similar to the situation in Germany, there are numerous undocumented women married to undocumented workers in the United States. Similar the

have the right to stay even if they leave their husbands demonstrate an unwillingness to separate. German social workers at the women's shelter in Frankfurt a. M. account for this unwillingness as a lack of feminine autonomy or a lifestyle choice by the foreign women:

> We can measure the meaning that the family group has for the foreign women by the pity they feel for our way of life. They cannot understand how we willingly live alone, or that we don't want children, or that we don't live together with our parents and so on. The consequent isolation, separation and loneliness seem for them to be too high a price for our life style (Göttert et. al.1988, p. 52). [9]

On the other hand, foreign women in the shelters have spoken about the ethnocentrism they have experienced within the shelters that has caused them to have serious concerns about what kind of life awaits them as foreign women, isolated from their families and community within an ethnocentric society. For Nevâl Gültekin (personal communication May, 1996), founder of a women's center for immigrants in Frankfurt a. M., Germany, the above explanation of life-style choice is a slightly disguised form of ethnocentrism. The implication that foreign women lack the willingness to live an autonomous life similar to that of the more emancipated German women, diverts from the analysis of ethnocentric structures in the society. And, Gültekin adds, "it is exactly these structures which keep her in a violent relationship."

Researchers have also pointed to how class and ethnicity can affect the perception of violence against women by the police (Hanmer, Radford, & Stanko 1989). Police are generally less responsive to complaints made by low-income, minority women while these women are, in turn, more suspicious of police intervention and are more reluctant to call upon the aid of law enforcement for incidences of violence. Ferraro (1989) describes the tendency of police officers in the United States to divide up citizens along the lines of 'normal' and 'deviant'. So-called 'normal' people fulfill the requirements of middle-class citizens by speaking English, working at good jobs and living with their families in nice houses without

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the immigrants in Germany, they fear deportation of their entire family if they should make claims against domestic violence. (See Immigration Act of 1990, Pub L. No. 101-649, 104 Stat. 4978. H.R.Rep. No.723 (I), 101st Cong., 2d Sess. 78 (1990), reprinted in 1990 U.S.C.C.A.N. 6710, 6758 cited in Crenshaw 1994 p. 96-97, 116). This seems to be an almost universal problem for immigrants. Hanmer (1989 p. 104) reports that in some police districts the first response an officer will make after receiving a call from an Asian person is to check their immigrant status.

getting drunk or using drugs too often. ‘Deviant’ people do not carry good jobs, have less structured family arrangements, often get drunk or high, live in poor housing and sometimes do not speak English. While domestic violence within the first group is considered a "legitimate police concern" and deserving of intervention, domestic violence within the latter group is considered a part of the cultural norm of "these kinds of people" for which police can do little or nothing (Ferraro 1989 p. 168).

Moreover, feminist theories regarding violence against women have not fully explained the phenomenon of intralesbian violence and intervention strategies designed for domestic abuse have often excluded battered lesbian women. Lesbian theorists (Eaton 1994; Janz, Staffens & Kosche 1994) hold that despite the great many similarities that can be found between heterosexual violence and intralesbian violence, the gender-based theories, systemic theories or theories of male domination fail to account for the differences between them basically because these theories pose a "heteronormative framework" upon lesbian relationships. Although most lesbians do not face the same economic dependency issues which heterosexual women face, there are other factors concerning the specific situation of lesbians within a heterosexually dominant society. For instance there seems to be psychodynamic interactions specific to lesbian relationships which could have causal effects in relation to violence; lesbians fear that publicly acknowledging battery, will force them ‘out’ and make them more vulnerable to homophobic discriminatory reactions; lesbians themselves may be unwilling to acknowledge the existence of intralesbian violence due to utopian views of a nurturing woman-centered communities; lesbians have been denied entitlement to basic support services such as shelters because of state regulations or because workers are ‘uncomfortable’ with the issue or with lesbians; most state statues such as the provision of restraining orders are limited to heterosexual relationships; counselors have used the existence of violence to try and persuade women to change their sexual orientation. These authors propose that the notions of lesbian invisibility and erasure must be tied into the conceptualization of intralesbian violence. On the other hand, this does not require that heterosexual women forfeit those theories that speak meaningfully to their experience, rather

[9] This and all subsequent translations are mine.

women could unite by attending to the specificities and commonalties of male-on-female and female-on-female intimate violence.

The cases described above show the importance of expanding the discussion of violence against women to include how racism and ethnocentrism, class, and homophobia affect the way policies are enacted, how violence is interpreted and how this situation is experienced by women in different positions within the same nation state. In regards to international relations, DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) has documented how the growth of militarization has affected the situation of women especially in third world countries. Global militarization and international conflicts have diverted resources and technology which potentially could be used to improve the quality of life for poor women; have contaminated the land of entire populations through nuclear missile testing; have resulted in a large number of women refugees; have resulted in military governments that have repressed basic human rights and used the standard methods of sexual abuse and rape to terrorize women; have supported military regimes that relegate women to the domestic sphere and portrayed them negatively through the mass media (Sen & Grown p.73). The women of DAWN conclude that "the conditions that breed violence, war, and inequality are themselves often the results of development strategies harmful or irrelevant to the poor and to women" (p. 74).

Rai (1996) makes the case that images of violence against women were used as a justification for colonialist and imperialist policies:

> Exoticism and degradation--both are images that we recognize today as signifying the Third World--were used as explanatory and legitimizing devises to construct a hegemonic discourse that was rooted in the Western philosophical and historical traditions of the Enlightenment. (...) On the one hand, we find a construction of colonial women as 'naturally' libidinous and out of control (as opposed to the placid and controlled Victorian woman), on the other, they are victims of a vicious, though male population, needing the protection of the civilizing colonial state (p.9).

The 'exotic' stereotype has allowed the blame for sexual abuse and exploitation to be placed on the victim while the stereotype of 'degradation' ironically makes a hero of the exploiter. The growth of the sex tourism industry and trafficking of women today demonstrates how these images veil the exploitation and abuse of women. Faced by a

seemingly hopeless situation of poverty, many third world women have turned to the heroic image of a European or US-American prince who will carry them away to a land of wealth and wellbeing. Upon arriving this dream becomes for many women a nightmare. Cases have been reported of extreme sexual and physical abuse of women by their partners. Isolated from family and friends, unable to speak the language, unfamiliar with their rights, and fearing deportation, these women are particularly susceptible to coercive techniques. Prevalent stereotypes of the third world woman as an exotic sex-symbol, or a submissive wife accustomed to a 'macho' man coupled with economic inequalities results in the eventual domestic abuse of third world women in first world countries (Agisra 1990; Prestrello & Dias 1996).

International relationships do not have adverse affects only on third world women but also northern women. Rebecca Grant (1994) makes the case that the feminine mystique as described by Friedan (1963) in the United States was in a large degree the result of U.S. foreign policy during that time. She explains:

> Marshaling a heightened national image of the feminine role was part of the process of legitimizing the military and cultural foundations of America's superpower status. The United States' role in the cold war required domestic society to adapt to complex ideological and military challenges stemming from the international environment. The status of gender relations in U.S. society fluctuated as part of this broader process of adaptation. (...) the feminine mystique buttressed the image of masculinity and eased the remilitarization of American society in the early 1950's. To adapt to the demands of the cold war, U.S. society drew on and cultivated a heightened view of femininity (pp. 124-125).

According to many researchers, symbols of masculinity and femininity are important factors in conditioning violence against women and in framing public perception. As I pointed out earlier, violence against women was not even a subject of public debate during the 1950s in the United States. It is intriguing to consider that cold war policy was providing the conditions that deterred any discussion of violence against women among researchers at that time.

The problems of militarization, nationalism, and ethnic hatred have also plagued the lives of women in Eastern Europe where rape and other gender-specific forms of violence are linked to these ideologies. Thus, women have asserted that violence against women must be understood in its particularity and in relationship to other forms of abuse and exploitation on an intercultural and international scale. This shows the need for an approach to this problem in light of intercultural communication and learning.

The above examples demonstrate how intercultural and international interactions have affected women and contributed to their experiences of violence. If we are to develop a broader understanding of violence against women, we must then include intercultural communication. Ute Guzzoni (1981) argues that exactly because the other is different, there is a need for communication. In the exchange relationship between different people, the other would not be subsumed under the desire and image of another, rather both sides would meet in an open process where the outcome is unknown, where the objectives are not fixed. In this process of exchange both are changed through communication.

However, asymmetrical relations of power have hampered intercultural communication and differences have often been organized according to hierarchical scales based on eurocentric concepts of development, modernity or civilization. Patrick Dias (1993; 1997; in print) explains that intercultural communication and educational projects between 'first world' and 'third world' countries have historically been characterized by either the imposition by the first world of structured and paternalistic approaches based on so-called modernizing and seemingly valid universal categories which are in fact based on evolutionary and eurocentric ideas concerning civilization and development or by utopian liberation projects based on moral concepts of solidarity and the expectation of revolutionary change through the uprising of the oppressed. Southern countries have employed the term 'third world' to express the international inequalities and relationships of dependence brought on by colonial and imperialist practices and to organize an attempt to find a 'third way' for development separate from the capitalist and communist blocks. However, these understandings of 'third world' have failed to develop a broader and critical reflection of the project of modernity, the development paradigm, or the globalization phenomena. P. V. Dias (1997; in print) calls for a project of intercultural communication and learning that is not

limited by structures of dominance or by belief in a singular ideal. Rather, differences among people, their particular histories, their various sets of beliefs and ways of life must be recognized and valued while nonsymmetrical structures that hinder communication be openly discussed so that the discourse of those in positions of subalterity be acknowledged within a global setting.

Because various cultures exist even within one nation state and because of the complex intertwining of economic political, ethnic, religious differences within and between nations the attempt at international dialogue represents a tremendous challenge. Linkenbach (Dias, P.V. & Linkenbach, 1992) cites some necessary considerations that must be taken into account in order to make intercultural communication a viable process:

> - recognize all of the members of the other culture – also the marginalized groups – as equal subjects, responsible for their own history. This also means to recognize their dialogue capabilities and search for dialogue with them in order to first, begin the process of critique and revision of ones own interpretation of the foreign culture;
>
> - and secondly – and this is decisive – allow for the others' relativization and critique of their own lifeform and tradition.
>
> - be willing to understand others on their own terms rather than to subordinate others to one's own objectives and (power)claims through the process of cognitive and practical-political appropriation.
>
> - thematize rather than deny the problem of *political and economic dependency* which was the result of the confrontation with western dominance (political, economic, cognitive)
>
> - regard the other culture not in a selective, partial or ahistoric manner but rather in its combined *totality, diversity and historicity*. (pp. 29-30)

Dias (Dias, P.V. & Linkenbach, 1992) states some of the reasons why intercultural communication especially between first and third world countries would be of value. He holds that regarding other people as subjects of knowledge and as members of value-producing cultures provides the first step in the construction of a common future; it can prepare us to see that the access to information about another way of life offers not just educational or practical tools but rather a way of understanding other people; it gives us the

awareness of the existence of another frame of reference which can expose our own psychosocial rootedness in certain meanings; and the relationship and connections between the other cultural context and one's own model of meaning and behavior can be set forth and thematized (taken from pp. 38-39). Finally P.V. Dias (in print) also argues that linguistic and cultural diversity and multiple ways of comprehending experience are not only a natural condition for most humans but are also essential for the survival and enrichment of humanity.

Provided that we recognize these challenges, intercultural communication and learning can offer women the possibility of acknowledging the wider scope of such problems as violence against women and allow for the exchange of ideas about finding solutions. Within the discussion on intercultural communication the division between 'first' and 'third' world, 'developed' and 'undeveloped' or 'developing,' 'normal' and 'exotic' must be critically analyzed. The current economic and political asymmetry between countries cannot be overlooked but rather included as an important issue in the attempt at communication and learning (Dias, P.V. & Linkenbach 1992).

By taking seriously the guidelines discussed above, I intend to present the case of the Brazilian women's movement against violence within an intercultural perspective. Rather than starting with a predefined concept of violence, I question how violence became a subject for public discourse, which groups interpreted that discourse and what were the political consequences. The study of violence against women within the Brazilian context presents a unique possibility to show how the particular circumstances within the Brazilian context must be understood within a broader look at international interactions. I think a reading on the women's movement against violence in Brazil through the framework of intercultural communication and learning could also offer a deeper understanding of the theoretical elements related to violence against women, of the factors which condition violence, the effects intercultural and international issues have on violence and of the different alternatives and strategies that could be used to combat the problem. Hopefully this discussion could offer new insights for the implementation of policies and programs that could better the situation of women not only in Brazil but in other countries as well.

CHAPTER 2

DISCOURSE AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

> The oppressed struggle in language to read ourselves –
> to reunite, to reconcile, to renew.
> Our words are not without meaning.
> They are an action – a resistance.
> Language is also a place of struggle.
>
> bell hooks (1989)

According to the critique of universalistic claims discussed previously, what could be considered as a seemingly singular phenomenon such as violence against women, is in fact, multifarious and dependent on the social/political context. Choosing just one of the many interpretations of violence and applying it to the specific Brazilian context could either lead to the assumption that there is only one legitimate way to look at the problem of violence against women, or limit the possibilities of analyzing the complexity of the various phenomena, thus resulting in an analysis that would occlude certain forms of violence against women. The interest of this study, therefore, is not to determine if one specific concept of violence 'fits' into a particular context, nor is it to provide a 'case' example separate and isolated from international interactions. Rather, my purpose is to trace how the issue of violence against women has been interpreted and discussed and how policies and practices have been installed within a particular multi-cultural nation positioned within a global framework.

Therefore, I intend to present an internal analysis of how violence against women is understood and how interpretations of this issue affect policies and initiatives aimed at dealing with the problem within a certain context. Key to my proposal is an analysis of the overall political situation, the conditions for action, the role of the various interlocutors, the interpretations and discourses which came into play as women sought to discuss, define and prevent violence. How did women define themselves and their needs? Which factors helped or

hindered this process? Which proposals were used and discarded? How can the relationship between political institutions and the movement against violence be best understood? Despite the distinct cultural and political context, many of the questions which women are discussing in one specific situation or culture, resonate in other contexts also. What features of the situation of women in a postcolonial country, for example, could challenge or question current western theories or strategies in regards to violence against women? Many northern theorists ignore the particular conditions of southern postcolonial States within international power structures. What particular features of a postcolonial State challenge western perspectives of the State, especially in regards to violence against women? Which aspects of a specific case such as the Brazilian struggle could offer important insights in dealing with violence in other countries, western and non-western, in the North or in the South? We have seen how the problem of violence against women has been interpreted not only according to local norms, but also as a result of intercultural relationships. How have problems of racism and imperialism affected the plight of women in situations of violence? How could international networks or coalitions address these relationships?

Many of these questions are related to the discursive understanding of violence against women and the possibility of communication among different cultures. The various interpretations of violence against women could be understood in terms of conflicting discourses. Women have pointed out the discrepancies and injustices that occur when a particular discourse about women or violence is assumed to be universal. Those who have written about violence against women have included in their discourses such issues as race, class, gender, sexual preference, colonization, imperialism and militarization. Especially 'third world' women and women of color have unveiled the ethnocentric bias of western feminist discourses and presented a number of challenges. They have made use of postmodern theories about discourse to unmask totalitarian and essentialist tendencies within feminism while at the same time they have attempted to build a political base in order to make positive changes in the real situation of the majority of women, who are poor, disenfranchised and without voice. They have identified feminism as diversified political movements coming from and molded by women situated in particular contexts. Recent feminist discussions have attempted to take into

account women's diversity while also seeking to find ways by which women can form alliances, communicate and learn from one another.

In presenting the various interpretations and interventions which have come out of the struggle against violence against women in Brazil, I shall take into account the critique and demands as outlined in the previous chapter, as well as make use of the theories and models on discourse which could offer insights into the multi-sidedness of the struggle. Therefore, I shall now focus on how discourses have been developed on the issue of violence against women and on how they could be understood within a discourse model of analysis. To this end, I will present Nancy Fraser's (1989) model of needs interpretation which provides a framework for the analysis of the struggles of oppositional movements. Fraser takes into account the various forms of communication and means by which people or groups make claims, the various levels of struggle that groups encounter when making their claims, the various institutions and collectives that articulate competing interpretations, and the several life dimensions in which these discourses take place.

However, Fraser did not originally intend for her model to be used for crosscultural comparisons or to describe the political struggles within a postcolonial State such as Brazil. Although Fraser's model was designed for the analysis of needs interpretation within a late capitalistic welfare State, or more specifically, to interpret the political processes within the United States, I feel that her model is flexible enough and has the descriptive power to offer insights into the analysis of the discourses concerning women and the present public debate on violence against women in the Brazilian context. Fraser's insights into competing discourses could carry us well beyond the disputes within the late capitalist welfare State exactly because she recognizes and incorporates the "heterogeneous, polyglot field of diverse possibilities and alternatives within a particular society" (1989, p. 165).

In what follows, I present Fraser's model while relating how her insights would be useful to our previous discussion on violence against women. By keeping in mind the general framework of intercultural communication offered by P.V.Dias, I make some critiques of the model and show how it could be complimented and expanded to help guide our discussion of the Brazilian women's movement against violence within a global framework. We shall go, therefore, from discourse to intercultural communication and learning.

Fraser's Discourse Model of Need Interpretation

In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis by social scientists to turn to the study of language, discourse and communication. Indeed, how discourses are formed, used and understood, and under what conditions people communicate has become the new paradigm for scientific reflection. Habermas (1981), for example has developed a "theory of communicative action" as a model whereby people and groups could discuss their claims and come to agreements based on democratic procedures; Foucault (1972) on the other hand, has demonstrated how certain groups are excluded from entering into discussion and how other groups have the power to define the terms of argumentation; Gilligan (1982) has theorized that women have "another voice" in which their understanding of justice is based more on caring than on the definition of rights; Spivak (1987) has questioned if subalterns will ever be allowed to voice their concerns or, more importantly, if others would be willing to listen and able to understand them. This brief sampling of theories shows some of the conflicting positions and questions raised in relation to discourse in the last few years that mirror some of the concerns in analyzing the problem of violence against women.

Fraser (1989) has developed a model that incorporates various theories regarding discourse. She has examined some of the most widely debated theories and has integrated Foucault's concepts of exclusion, the critique of institutions and the role of the expert, Derridas' deconstructionism, Rorty's pragmatism, together with Habermas' theory of communication to arrive at a feminist critical theory. She holds that in late capitalistic welfare States the discussion of people's needs is a central medium for making and contesting political claims. Her approach is unique in that she focuses on *discourses about needs* and the politics of *needs interpretation* which she feels sheds more light on the "contextual and contested character of needs claims" than the usual approach which simply focuses on whether a previously defined set of needs will or will not be satisfied (p. 163). Fraser asserts that needs, rather than being obvious and given, are interpreted and politically contested, and she questions the authority and interests of those who make these definitions. She acknowledges that some forms of public discourse may be more available to some groups than others, and finally, she brings into relief the social and institutional processes of need interpretation and the relations between interpreters. Therefore, Fraser recognizes and analyzes the various processes by which discourses about needs are

brought into the political arena, how different interest groups, experts, institutions and the State contribute to the interpretation of these needs, and how policies are developed to satisfy needs within a specific context. In the same token, Fraser insists on the plurality of agents and discourses while demonstrating power differences between interest groups and while describing how group identities may form, reform or merge during the political processes. By acknowledging the problems of grand universal theories which could oversimplify and misrepresent with reductionist arguments and also by attempting to avoid contexual relativism which would deny any standards for critique, Fraser has developed a model which provides "a big diagnostic picture necessary to orient political practice while at the same time respecting historical specificity, societal differentiation, and cultural multiplicity" (Fraser 1989, p.11).

In the introduction to her book *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (1989) Fraser writes an "Apologia for Academic Radicals" in which she discusses the social role and political function of intellectuals. As a woman who identifies herself as a socialist-feminist, former New Left activist, and academic, she considers this book to be a contribution to the debate concerning the relationships between theoretical developments and political practices. She cites Marx's definition of critique as "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age," (Marx 1975, p. 209 cited in Fraser 1989, p.113) which she uses as a thermometer to gauge the relationship between theory and political practice. She gives three reasons for this choice:

> (...) first, it valorizes historically specific, conjunctural struggles as the agenda setters for critical theory; second, it posits social movements as the subjects of critique; and third, it implies that it is in the crucible of political practice that critical theories meet the ultimate test of viability (1989, p. 2).

This intertwining of theory and practice underlies her writing and it is with these points in mind that we can better understand her model of needs interpretation.

Fraser states that a distinctive mark of late capitalist political culture is the talk about people's needs which is often juxtaposed with discourses about rights and interests. Needs talk, as she sees it, is the officially recognized idiom of the day as well as for the foreseeable future in which "political conflict is played out and through which inequalities are symbolically

elaborated and challenged" (p. 163-164). For better or worse, the interpretation of needs is the turf on which political agents play out their strategies and articulate their interests.

She also describes and clarifies the various struggles, spheres and actors involved in needs talk to show both the emancipatory and repressive possibilities of this medium. She argues that needs claims produce a contested network of *in-order-to relations* for which certain conditions, policies, or interventions are necessary *in order to* satisfy these needs. To exemplify her point, she discusses the needs of the homeless. Differences in interpretation occur when trying to determine what people need *in order to* acquire a home and the deeper we go down the in-order-to chain of relations the more controversial these disputes usually become. Discussions about the needs of homeless can instigate an entire series of questions concerning rent subsidies, income supports, jobs, job training and education, daycare as well as the very nature of private ownership and urban real estate investment (Fraser 1989).

Similarly, as I have previously demonstrated in the discussion concerning violence against women, researchers have argued that women need more than just immediate protection from an abusive man since they see violence against women as coming from the cultural fabric of the society. Such issues as economic equality and racial discrimination all the way up to international stereotypes have entered into the discussion. I have also shown that there is controversy on how to articulate the various forms of violence, on what the causes for violence against women are and subsequently, on what interventions should be made. Therefore, Fraser's concept of needs interpretation and the in-order-to chain parallel our previous discussion on violence.

In developing her model, one of the principle divisions that Fraser makes is that between private and political spheres. She notes that there are two main ways of defining 'political' in current discussions: an official or institutional sense of the term in which political is that which is handled by official governmental institutions; and a broader sense in which political is that which is contested and debated in public. The latter is a discursive understanding of the political since it denotes something which has been 'politicized' through discursive channels. For her model, Fraser uses this second understanding of political although she notes that these terms are related since something usually becomes a subject of government intervention only after it has been discussed politically.

Once again the division between private and political have been key issues for the women's movements. What could be considered political and what could be considered private are not fixed notions but vary according to culture and historical period. The slogan 'the personal is political' was an attempt by feminists to contest the sexist ideology which supported and defined these divisions and to bring issues, which were until then hidden within the private sphere such as domestic violence, birth control and child care, out into public/political discussion. Fraser (1989; 1997) argues that the categories 'private' and 'public' are not divided between women and men respectively since the sphere of women's activity has not always been just the private and likewise, men's just the public.[1] Feminists, rather than attempting to destroy these spheres should show the political and ideological character of these categories and how through sexual hierarchy these divisions give more power to men than to women.[2] These categories are also stratified according to class and race. Historically in the United States, for example, people of color or low-income people have not had the same right to privacy as middle-class white men. Therefore, we should understand the division between the private and political not as a static and rigid demarcation but rather as a line drawn according to cultural norms which curves and breaks in relation to social categories such as gender, class, race, sexual orientation and so on.[3]

Fraser (1989) goes on to describe some of the institutions within a male-dominated capitalist society and how they are placed along the private/political divide. Two sets of institutions which contrast with the 'political' and which usually act as depoliticizing forces are

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[1] See Fraser's article "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender" in which she criticizes the gendered account of private and public spheres in Habermas. See also Yeatman (1986) who criticizes the individual/society and femininity/masculinity dichotomies, which are superimposed, on the domestic/public division made within sociological theory.

[2] See Eschtain (1981) who critiques the feasibility of the slogan 'the private is political' and the conceptualization of the private within radical feminist discourse. Eschtain argues that feminism should not be about converging the public into the private or vice versa but rather reconstructing the spheres based on ethical imperatives of dignity, equal participation and aesthetic standards.

[3] There are many examples of the arbitrary nature of the public and private spheres. See Eaton (1994) for some examples of how law enforcement and the legal system did not acknowledge or respect the private lives of homosexuals. Fraser (1997) gives an account of how the construction of privacy was construed along lines of race and gender within the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. Crenshaw (1994) discusses how people of color have attempted to construct their privacy as a haven from a racist society. This poses a problem for those people of color in need of police protection who must make hard choices between intervention by a racist law enforcement system or lack of protection. Schneider (1994) gives examples of the selective application of the law in regards to private/public spheres especially in relation to pregnant women and battering men. She cites

the ‘domestic’ – primarily the male-headed nuclear family – and the ‘economic’ – which includes the basic components of late capitalism: paid workplaces, markets, credit mechanisms and so-called private businesses and corporations (Fraser 1989, p. 168). Domestic institutions act to depoliticize issues by categorizing them as family, personal, or sexual matters that should remain outside the context of public discussion. The economic institutions within a capitalistic economy although quite different from the domestic in other ways, have a similar depoliticizing effect since they tend to interpret matters in terms of ‘private’ ownership, as managerial issues, or ‘free’ market imperatives (Fraser 1989, p. 168). By keeping matters in the private sphere these two institutions direct discourses away from public discussion where a variety of interpretations could arise. As a result certain interpretations of needs go unchallenged and are maintained as the authoritarian norm. Since these institutions support relations of dominance and subordination, these ‘naturalized’ interpretations also tend to privilege certain groups and individuals while disadvantaging others.

Fraser also recognizes that the division between domestic and economic in late-capitalistic societies can indeed prevent discussion of alternative interpretations. It is important to note Fraser’s critique of Habermas in a previous chapter (Fraser 1989, chapter 6 – What’s Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender) in which she argues that Habermas has failed to take into consideration the wealth of feminist production of the past years; and has, therefore, been blinded by male bias by dividing the economic from the domestic. This division occludes the possibilities of analyzing the family in economic terms, of analyzing the consequences of women’s unpaid childrearing work, or the influence of domestic organization within the workplace. Thus, Fraser is careful to characterize the ‘political’, ‘domestic’ and ‘economic’ as "cultural classifications and ideological labels rather than as designations of structures, spheres or things" (Fraser 1989 p. 166). Part of the challenges brought on by social movements has been to question the definitions and boundaries of these classifications.

Likewise in her later book, *Justice Interruptus* (1997) Fraser also criticizes Habermas’ delimitation of private interests within the discursive public arena. Habermas argues that only

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several examples of pregnant women who were charged with criminal child abuse for drinking or drug use while they sought medical services for injuries sustained as a result of battering.

issues of the common good should be brought within the collective arena. However, Fraser counters that ideals of democratic processes and communication are inconsistent with restrictions on public/private boundaries. She cites once again the topic of violence against women, which was considered by the general public as a private matter unfit for political, public discussion. Only after the feminist movement contested these boundaries through sustained discourses and political manifestations was violence against women considered a public issue of concern.

In line with Fraser's argumentation, we could cite how arbitrary demarcations of private and public hindered judicial processes against violent aggressors. Women who have denounced domestic violence or rape have had to deal with attempts by the defense to disqualify the crime by questioning the women's personal, 'private' life. Women victims of violence have had to respond to accusations concerning their faithfulness as wives, their dedication to their family and home, their sexuality and their femininity. While white male domestic privacy has been most often protected, female domestic life has been held up to public scrutiny.

In the previous chapter, I discussed other forms of violence against women that have been allowed to continue simply because the problems confronting women have been traditionally considered domestic, private concerns rather than political issues. Women have shown, for instance, how development planners have ignored their needs and enacted policies that seriously hindered their access to food and water; thereby seriously compromising their role as providers of these resources. Economic policies of international capitalism, while purporting to provide 'public' benefits, adhere to the ideology of a free-market based on the 'private' decisions of a particular industry (Sen & Grown 1987). In these situations, industrial control of the line between public and private is more likened to a carefully choreographed dance.[4] Likewise, sexual control over women in the domestic sphere can seriously hinder their performance in the economic sphere as can men's 'private' sexual harassment of women in the

[4] An interesting case in point is the discourse of the Ford subsidiary in Brazil. Having installed itself for many years in the region of São Paulo, the company decided to relocate to the northeast of Brazil in the late 1990s. Proclaiming the 'public' benefits it would provide to the northeast it demanded and received governmental infrastructural support. However, when workers in São Paulo demanded compensation for the loss of jobs caused by the relocation, the industry responded that its relocation was based on 'private' market and managerial imperatives and was not a public issue.

workplace. Thus, as Fraser argues against Habermas, for many women the division between domestic and economic is not always so clear.

Faser goes on to analyses how oppositional groups, such as the battered women's movement, have been able to break through the private sphere and install their concerns as issues of public debate. Throughout this process, rivaling groups have at their disposal various discursive resources which Fraser calls "the sociocultural means of interpretation and communication." These resources include:

> 1. the officially recognized idioms in which one can press claims – for example needs talk, rights talk, interests talk, etc.;
> 2. the vocabularies available for instantiating claims – for example therapeutic, administrative, religious, feminist, socialist vocabularies;
> 3. the paradigms of argumentation accepted as authoritative in adjudicating conflicting claims – for example by appeals to experts, by brokered compromises, by voting, by privileging the interpretations of those whose needs are in question;
> 4. the narrative conventions available for constructing individual or collective stories constitutive of social identities;
> 5. modes of subjectification in which people are positioned within a particular society – for example as 'normal' or 'deviant', as victim or as activist, as an individual or member of a social group (taken from Fraser 1989, pp.164-165).

Just as social groupings within a society are not merely pluralistic but also stratified in terms of power, discursive resources are also divided along lines of dominance and subordination. Some ways of making needs claims are considered more legitimate at a given time while others are discounted or excluded. Dominant groups attempt to "exclude, defuse, and or co-opt counter-interpretations." while oppositional groups attempt to "challenge, displace, and/or modify dominant ones" (Fraser 1989 p. 166). Fraser identifies the 'place' or societal arena where these communicative resources are employed by groups to make claims pertaining to needs. She takes from Hannah Arendt (1958) the concept of "the social," but differently from Arendt, she considers 'the social' to have characteristics of 'civil society' meaning that its parameters are not fixed but "multivalent and contested" (Fraser 1989, p. 185 ft. 16).

Fraser holds that making a matter political depends on the degree of discursive publicity it obtains. However she views publicity not in terms of a monolithic unity but rather as a

differentiated grouping of publics which can be distinguished along ideological, gender, class and thematic lines Fraser (1997) later expands on this idea of diverse publics. She hails Habermas (1989) for differentiating the public arena of citizen discourse from the apparatuses of the State and the official economy, noting the confusion that plagued particularly the socialist and Marxist traditions because they conflated the State with the citizenry, which resulted in an institutionalized authoritarian State rather than a participatory democracy. On the other hand, Fraser criticizes Habermas' notion of a single comprehensive public sphere as the preferred structure for democratic discussions. She notes how historically subordinated groups, which have not had access to public participation, formed alternative publics, which she calls *subaltern counterpublics*. For example, the black church within the United States offered a parallel public in which African Americans, who were excluded from full participation in the official civil society, had a space to criticize and debate racism, publish newspapers and hold national conventions. Likewise before women's suffrage, elite women formed philanthropic and reform societies while working class women participated in class-based protests which they used as a means to discuss their needs (see Brooks-Higginbotham 1993 and Warner 1990 cited in Fraser 1997). Thus, Fraser holds that multiple publics allow for a more democratic and participatory form of political decision-making than a singular public sphere.

Fraser (1997), therefore, modifies Habermas' design of the public sphere. I have already discussed two of these modifications: she argues that subject matter for discussion should not exclude 'private interests;' and that multiple publics are preferable to a singular public. Other observations that Fraser makes regarding her critique of the liberal model include the problem of social inequalities and stratifications. She argues that one cannot simply discuss issues within the public arena *as if* no differences existed, rather, for authentic democratic discourse to occur, social inequalities must be eliminated. Critical theory, therefore, should expose the ways in which social inequalities skew and limit the possibilities for discursive communication within public spheres.[5] Finally, although she acknowledges the need to differentiate between State apparatuses and public discourses, Fraser holds that a strict separation of State and civil society

[5] Dussel (2000) argues differently that inequalities can never be eliminated. Rather than hold social equality as a prerequisite, he holds that it should be a continual goal within the community of communication. Inequalities are made apparent through the organization and critique of a community of victims who suffer the perverse effects of a well-intentioned system.

would only foster the idea of laissez-faire capitalism and consequently socioeconomic inequalities. Therefore, she calls for the incorporation of a *strong public,* which would be the decision-making sovereign parliaments within the State, as part of the discourse model; thereby identifying a particular public discursive sector within the State apparatus. She identifies *weak publics* as those which focus their attention on opinion formation and do not have decision-making powers.

In order for a particular topic or need to become a legitimate issue for public discussions it must be identified and acknowledged by various publics as a political issue. Fraser identifies and describes three levels of struggles which social movements face in order to make their claims known and satisfied. The first struggle of an oppositional group is that of public recognition – to have a particular issue become a matter of public discussion. In so doing, the oppositional groups contest the established divisions between political and private, domestic and economic. By using the discursive resources they have available, they attempt to gather support for their position while presenting alternative interpretations of their needs with alternative in-order-to chains. If successful, they weaken previously hegemonic discourses related to their needs and create new discourses for the interpretation of their needs. This is also the moment of group formation and identity politics (Fraser 1989).

The oppositional discourse of politicization is contested by a second type of discourse identified as 'reprivatization' discourse, which defends the previously established boundaries of political, economic and domestic spheres. These reprivatization discourses, because they represent the status quo, are considerably entrenched and powerful. By attempting to deny the claims of oppositional groups, reprivatization discourses may in fact contribute to the continued politicization of the discourse and may also modify their own interpretations (Fraser 1989, p. 172). During this phase, other interest groups may contest the interpretation of oppositional groups and attempt to cast the issue in ways that would co-opt or skew the oppositional group's demands, thus imposing their own interpretation on the need in question. Viewed in this way, the second phase of the model can be understood as the struggle over the content of need interpretation.

A third level of need interpretation involves the role of the State and how it should attend to the politicized need. Key discourses within this level include expert, political administrative

and policy discourses. Expert discourses can be useful to oppositional groups in that they translate politicized needs into public policy proposals and, therefore, form a bridge between these groups and the State. Expert discourses can emerge from academic and juridical institutions and professional associations; their vocabulary can be legal, therapeutic, medical, administrative and so on. As expert discourses attempt to redefine needs within the State bureaucratic structures, they typically decontextualize such needs which may result in their depolitization (Fraser 1989, p. 174-175).

Application of Fraser's Model to the Interpretation of Violence against Women

Fraser uses the example of the history of the battered women's movement in the United States (based on Schechter 1982) to exemplify her model. Because the history of the movement is particularly interesting for our discussion, I will provide a more thorough examination of the movement by offering more details based on Schechter's account than Fraser provides in her article.[6] As we cited in chapter 1, domestic violence was not an issue of public debate in the United States before the 1970s, rather, it was considered a private, domestic issue between husband and wife. Women who sought help from the police, social workers, medical workers, or the judiciary system were stopped short by the enactment of policies and the use of discursive practices which reflected the predominate interpretation of domestic violence at that time. Battered women's behavior was described as hysterical, masochistic, undisciplined, impatient or provocative. In those cases that were made public, male behavior was interpreted according to deviant behavior, as rare pathological exceptions (Schechter 1982). The response of the judicial system to consign wife battering to the status of 'family squabble'; the reluctance of the police force to interfere or their tendency to lend support to the batterer; the indifference of social welfare agencies to support battered women; and the religious discourse of charitable organizations which focused on 'family unity' were responses which acted to keep the issue of domestic violence within the private sphere away from the reaches of public policy (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989).

[6] In the following account, the information regarding the battered women's movement comes from Schechter's book (1982) while the interpretative analysis based on the needs interpretation model is Fraser's (1989).

The movement against violence against women in the United States came out of a context of previous civil rights organization of the 1960s and 1970s and preceded an anti-rape movement, which constructed networks among women and organizations and produced interpretations relating to male dominance and female subjugation (Schechter 1982). Out of this context, women activists became more engaged in issues relating to the welfare of women, they began to realize the extent of the problem of violence against women and they began to organized women's shelters, funded sometimes by the activists themselves or by private donations, where battered women could find a safe place to stay and receive support (Schechter 1982). The shelters were most often organized in a nonorthodox, nonhierarchical way without a clear difference between staff and beneficiary. In the beginning, most staff members were volunteers and many of them had been in abusive relationships. Rather than 'clients' or women with 'psychological problems,' the battered women were perceived as 'potential activists' (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989).

This type of organization and subjective positioning facilitated consciousness-raising activities where women were encouraged to reevaluate their interpretations of battering. Thus, the shelters provided not only security needs but also an arena for group and identity formation and the development of political strategies. Whereas most women considered themselves to be responsible for the violence due to their inadequacies as women or wives previous to their experience in the shelters, many, upon discussing their situation with other women in the shelter, began to adopt a politicized interpretation in which domestic violence was perceived as part of the social problem of female oppression (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989). Schechter (1982) is careful to point out that women who first became involved in the movement differed ideologically and many did not identify themselves immediately with feminism, rather, for many activists, a feminist interpretation of battering would come with the process of organizing:

> We discovered our politics in the process of discovering ourselves. When we say how totally the traditional system failed to meet the needs of battered women, we rushed in to save them. What kept us from being a bunch of Lady Bountifuls was that everything learned from the women themselves, and our struggles with policy, direction, and with each other, was moving *us* off the continuum from victim to survivor. The personal was political. Personally, I didn't call myself a feminist when we started. It sort of snuck up and embraced me as I lived it (interview cited in Schechter p. 65).

As the activists began to solidify their interpretation of violence against women, they formed new vocabularies to deal with this issue. They used the word 'battered' taken from criminal law instead of 'beaten' to assert their interpretation that this violence should be perceived and dealt with as a type of criminal offense. They produced statistics, testimonies and historical documents to back up their claim that domestic violence should be understood as a social problem rather than as a matter of rare deviant behavior and argued that the causes of domestic violence could be found in the historically conditioned social structures of male dominance and female subordination (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989). Based on this interpretation, activists produced a new chain of in-order-to relations to meet the needs of battered women. In order to be free from their abusive husbands, battered women needed not only immediate protection but also good paying jobs, daycare, housing and so on (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989). Women activists used the networks that had been developed during the civil and women's rights movements to disperse their interpretations and needs claims to a wider range of publics. The work of the battered women's movement required considerable energy, creativity, luck, and the persistence of its members to push through the established private/political divisions (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989).

Once their needs are recognized as an issue for public debate, the oppositional groups enter the second phase of struggle over needs interpretations in which they meet head on with organized interests and other groups which attempt to interpret these needs in accord with their own political agenda (Fraser 1989). The battered women's movement had to struggle to maintain their socio-political interpretation before the advance of reprivatization discourses: conservative agencies began to develop programs for battered women along traditional, non-feminist lines; some commissions questioned the 'sexist' proposal of the shelters because they excluded men; many researchers interpreted the problems of battered women as a mental health issue or as a 'family systems failure.' (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989). In this way the very purposes of oppositional groups are skewed or co-opted.

However, Fraser points out that reprivatization discourses may also tend to politicize needs by "increasing their cathectedness as a focus of contestation" (Fraser 1989 p. 172). Shocked by the lack of response from public institutions, women activists formed coalitions that furthered their political power. Also by utilizing the media they were also able to publicize

stories of women who were not properly attended by public institutions, thereby gaining more support for their cause (Fraser 1989).

This brings us to the third struggle of needs interpretation, in which State intervention, particularly in the form of funding and the design of special programs and policies, becomes the focal point of discussion. Fraser describes the role of the experts as developing public policy and translating the needs defined by social groups into the language of administration and State intervention. This struggle was made apparent in the battered women's movement when shelters won recognition as legitimate candidates for the "publicly organized satisfaction of needs" through State funding (Fraser 1989). The State, through its bureaucratic structures transforms original need interpretations into formal policy with administrative requirements. Shelters had their accounting procedures regulated and were required to professionalize their staff. New administrative vocabularies caused women activists to change their focus. For instance, reimbursements from the State were given for 'units of client services' translated as sessions of individual counseling and advocacy. Workers began to perceive battered women as 'clients' and greater attention was given to individual needs rather than group consciousness raising and peer support. Funding was to be directed towards individual 'service' rather than community education. These requirements acted to reprivatize the once politicized movement causing workers to concentrate their energies on the needs of 'individual clients' whose needs were 'psychologized.' Problems of women's 'low self-esteem' or tendency to 'love too much' supplanted the in-order-to needs claims for social and economic restructuring (Schechter 1982; Fraser 1989). This example of the battered women's movement in the United States illustrates how the "politics of needs interpretation" can transform into the "administration of need satisfaction" (Fraser 1989).

Fraser shows that even needs that are depoliticized through other interpretations or through the State administration can again be politicized or at least contested through resistance and reinterpretation by opposing groups. One such tendency is for individuals to reinterpret official interpretations of needs to their own advantage without challenging the system overtly. She cites an example from Linda Gordon (1986; 1988a) of how battered women filed child abuse allegations against their husbands and, in this way, were able to

draw attention to wife battering. By invoking a ‘legitimate’ need claim they were able to broaden the interpretation to an unrecognized need and receive assistance from the State.

Another strategy is exemplified through the informal organization of groups whose practices contest the State definition of needs and beneficiaries. The "domestic kin networks" of poor black welfare recipients as documented by Carol Sack (1974) were arrangements of communal exchanges and sharing of benefits that circumvented State requirements. These practices also acted as a form of resistance to the States positioning of subjects as deviant (families lacking bread-winners) and replaced the subject-position to members of socially constituted networks of cooperation (cited in Fraser 1989).

Therapeutic designed interventions by the State have been resisted by groups or individuals while they receive material aid. Fraser uses the example provided by Prudence Rains (1971) of how black pregnant teenagers through the use of humor, deliberative misunderstanding of questions or by openly questioning the "therapeutic language game" resisted the mental health aspects of a facility for pregnant teenagers while accepting the health services. Aside from the above informal or cultural forms of resistance, beneficiaries of the social welfare State may organize formal political groups to challenge the administrative interpretation of needs. One such example is the resistance of welfare recipients who organized as clients in what became the welfare-rights movement of the 1960s (Piven & Cloward 1971; Gordon 1988b; West 1981 cited in Fraser 1989).

In concluding her presentation of the needs interpretation model, Fraser argues that there should be some guidelines to determine if a certain interpretation is better than another. She holds that the "best need interpretations" are the result of those attained through democratic communicative processes that are based on the premises of equality and fairness and that hinder the installation of rights which would disadvantage other groups (1989, p. 182). Finally, Fraser aligns herself with those favoring a translation of justified needs claims to social rights. She holds that paternalism such as we find in the social welfare system occurs because needs are separated from rights claims. Within rights talk, the individualistic, bourgeois liberal claims such as private property should be offset by talk of social rights.

A Critique and Revision of Fraser's Model in Light of Intercultural Communication

Before I discuss how this model might be adapted for a study of the Brazilian context within an intercultural framework, I would like to comment on a few general features of the model. One point is the role and functions of the oppositional groups, which Fraser describes as working in the direction of the politicization of needs. However, there may be times when oppositional groups work to reprivatize needs, albeit in a political way, such as the example of the pro-choice campaign in which issues of private and political were intertwined. The classic feminist argument has been that the decision to terminate a pregnancy or not should be a private, individual decision of a particular woman. In an interview with Fraser (1997), I discussed with her how abortion could be understood as a "political right to make a private decision." The strategies of the pro-choice campaign demonstrate the nuances in the fight to determine the private/public line. The movement sought to lift the issue up to the public sphere in order to change opinions and instigate legal reform that would define abortion as a private decision. By articulating abortion as a 'right' they concurrently demanded that the State would assume abortion costs for low-income women. Therefore, oppositional groups may have to work in both directions in an attempt to define and defend the parameters of privacy.[7]

Secondly, Fraser underscores the heterogeneous nature of discourses and interpretations but I think this point could be expanded. Although she alludes to the fragmentary character of social movements (1989 p. 172), she generally describes the oppositional movement in unitary form. However, in Schechter's (1982) account of the battered women's movement one could find in any one shelter "radical feminists, feminists with a professional perspective, former battered women, non-feminist professionals, and women who viewed their work primarily as a way to earn a living" (pp. 103-104). Within the movement, radical feminists were accused of putting pressure on battered women to separate

[7] There has been abundant discussion on how feminists should conceptualize the private. Schneider (1994) argues that rather than perceive privacy as protection from interference it would be more fruitful to construe it in terms of the affirmative concept of liberty towards autonomy, self-expression and development; of freedom to choose in regards to the basic decisions of one's life; as freedom from intrusion or restrain; and freedom to care for and express oneself. Under this understanding of privacy, reproductive choice is conceived as allowing women to become full persons and to participate fully in society. In terms of battered women, this notion of privacy could be used to articulate the needs of battered women who seek autonomy, freedom of choice, self-expression, self-determination and freedom from battering and coercion.

from their husbands rather than empowering them to make their own decisions; differences arose concerning the role men should take in the movement; problems of homophobia, classism, and racism divided the shelters (Schechter 1982). Women who would have supported the battered women's movement have pointed to problems of exclusion within the movement. Also, in chapter 1, I cited how the voices of women of color and third world women have provided new insights to understanding the complexity and multidimensional aspects of women's oppression as well as bringing to the forefront new strategies for dealing with the problem.

Fraser is, of course, aware of the issues of diversity among women – see for instance her chapter: "Multiculturalism, Antiessentialism, and Radical Democracy" (1997) – however, I think it is important to explicitly include within her model the inner dynamics of social movements, which carry some of the features of the larger stratified society. I think it is more fruitful to conceive oppositional movements as aggregates of groups with various interests that forge a plan of action through discursive processes. However, these discursive processes may not always be democratic or inclusive, which may eventually be the cause for movement fragmentation and disintegration. The evolution of a movement can result in the exclusion of certain groups from full participation within the movement or a more inclusive movement with an expanded theoretical understanding of oppression and more sophisticated intervention strategies. Varying discourses and interpretations are continually present *within* social movements and this complexity can give the movement the necessary dynamics it needs to survive or it can divide and splinter the movement.

Another comment involves the order of the struggles. When I brought this up to Fraser, she immediately acknowledged that the phases she had described were not necessarily chronological as she had originally envisioned, but should be understood as analytic differentiations in the struggle for needs interpretation. Her later article concerning the Thomas/Hill proceedings (Fraser 1997), in fact, demonstrates how a particular need may suddenly become an issue of public debate due to certain events which draw public attention before the oppositional movement's interpretation has solidified. Only after the Thomas/Hill media event did sexual harassment become a prominent organizing issue for the feminist movement in the United States. In such circumstances, the reprivatization discourses and other

interest groups do not have the time to reinterpret the needs set forth according to their own agenda before the issue becomes open to public debate.

Thus, when employing Fraser's model to analyze social movements within the United States, I think that first, it is important to reiterate the complexities and nuances involved in defining the line between the private and political. For instance, the slogan, 'the private is political' while a good catch phrase for gaining the public's attention for women's issues, hardly serves as a sound basis for developing theory and practice (Elschtain 1981). Oppositional groups must be able to translate these nuances into public policy, and they may take the position of attempting to publicly reprivatize their needs. Also, the same dynamics used to describe the struggle over need interpretation appear to occur within social movements. Diversity and 'multiple intersecting differences' have been used as characteristics of women's social movements as well as multicultural societies. Therefore, Fraser's model also provides concepts for the internal analysis of social movements. Finally, within the dynamics of political activism, one cannot await a systematic prescribed procedure for struggle. This model is no such attempt, but rather describes and analyzes processes that appear to occur within political struggles regardless of chronological order.

Although this model was developed in relationship to needs talk in the late capitalist welfare State (particularly the United States), I find that it could be used to analyze certain discussions which occur also within international organizations. For instance, within 'development' talk we could ask, Who determines the needs of so-called third world people? How are these needs articulated? Who has the power to determine policies and funding? How do oppositional groups express their interpretations? Authority laden interpretations come from administrative organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations while special interest groups would include business corporations, political and religious movements and even nation States. The model would have to be adjusted but Fraser's insights have the potential to expand the analysis beyond the late-capitalist welfare State.

When making an internal analysis of how discourses arise and how different groups with competing discourses fight for power within a capitalistic welfare State, international variations may not seems so pertinent to the discussion, and Fraser's current model would seem quite suitable. However, because we are interested in 'intercultural communication and

learning' it is necessary to take one step backwards and consider the culturally specific peculiarities of the institutions, the underlying philosophic influences, the government apparatus, the discursive resources, and so on within a given nation State as well as how subjects have constructed their own histories and identities.

The concepts Fraser uses in her model such as the 'State', the 'social', 'experts', the 'political', 'economic' and 'private', 'discursive resources' are complex and multivariant within the confines of one particular nation-State and also within late-capitalistic welfare States. How could we understand these concepts within a postcolonial State such as Brazil? Before I respond to this I would like to look at some of the differences between late-capitalistic welfare States. I think it is necessary to underscore that these concepts have been constructed discursively within specific historical, cultural and political not to mention geographic circumstances. For instance, the United States and Germany could both be described as late-capitalistic welfare States, yet they differ from each other in their political party system, in the role expected of the State in providing basic needs for the population, in their concepts of citizenship, in their juridical systems, and so on. A concept such as 'equality' for example that is easily translated, may in fact have different connotations in various settings.[8]

Although Fraser uses the term 'welfare state' as a generic term, it speaks primarily to the United States experience. In Germany the State is defined as a social State (*Sozialstaat*) rather than a welfare State (*Wohlfahrtsstaat*). This is more than a semantic nuance for it implies a difference in the way the State is constructed and how benefits for the population are defined and distributed. Germany is considered to have a 'strong' welfare State whereby the major responsibility for the well-being of the population, including the provision of health care, education from daycare to university, unemployment payments, support to the disabled, low-income housing and so on, resides in the State. This understanding of the State has resulted, among other things, in a policy of high taxation and a low percentage of private and philanthropic institutions. In the United States, the State is considered 'weak', meaning that it intervenes as little as possible in the lives of its citizens. Public health, daycare and welfare

[8] For an interesting example of the differing concepts of 'women's equality' see Robert Moeller's (1993) examination of the postwar women's movements in Germany and how their ideological bases differed from those of the women's movements in the United States. See also Uta Gerhard (1990) for a historical, sociological and legal discussion on the concept of equality for women.

programs are designed to care for only the most destitute and often for temporary periods. The needs of the population are intended to be met primarily by other institutions such as the churches and private philanthropic agencies.

In both countries, the forms of political organization although based on democratic ideals are structured differently. Germany has a parliamentary multi-party system; whereas the United States has a presidential system and, for all practical purposes, a two-party system. Just these differences alone influence the alternatives available to social organizations and movements in politicizing their needs and the strategies they might use to gain recognition and support from the State. One example is the well-known *Grüne Partei* in Germany, which started as a grassroots environmental movement that was able to bring its concerns to the public arena by becoming a political party. In the United States, environmentalists have formed private non-governmental organizations that lobby for environmental policies; the possibility of an environmental party gaining enough representation to make a difference in the senate or congress or winning the presidency remains remote.[9]

Thus, although easily translated from one to the other, the terms *State* and *Staat* do not necessarily refer to the same thing. The function and inner dynamics of the State are determined by the particularities of the context, which include historical, economic, political and ideological factors.[10] These brief examples give an indication of the variations one can encounter among late-capitalistic 'welfare' States and the consequences these hold for political movements. As we expand our discussion to include other types of States, such as postcolonial, we can expect to find even more differences.

Beyond the broad general understanding of the role of the State, I find it necessary to analytically divide the State into its various components. We cannot assume that all States are structured along the same lines or that they operate in the same way, nor can we expect that

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[9] In the 1980 election in the United States the Citizen's Party, with Barry Commoner as the presidential candidate, organized primarily around environmental issues. While bringing these issues to the national arena during the elections, the Citizen's Party failed to form a stable third party.

[10] Will Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) criticizes the fact that most political theorists simply consider the singular nation State in their discussions without acknowledging the existence of other multiple forms of State organization. He notes that culturally homogeneous nation-States are the exception rather than the rule and cites other types of State formation such as the multiethnic State, the multinational State and the federation of States. Certainly if one considers the territorial status of Puerto Rico and the self-governing rights of some Native American nations, the United States could be considered a multinational State. Other examples such as Switzerland, Belgium, Great Britain, Canada and so on abound.

all components of the State maintain a similar position in regards to oppositional groups. On the contrary, oppositional groups have found it more fruitful to secure support from particular subareas of the State where they can find more conducive conditions for the articulation and reinforcement of their needs interpretations. Fraser (1997) has already noted that parliament or the legislature constitutes a particular *strong* public within the State where opinions are formed and where decisions (laws) are made in contrast to *weak* publics whose practices are limited to opinion formation. However, one can find parliamentary organization at the municipal, state and federal level. Likewise government agencies, councils or boards on education, public safety, housing, transportation, environment and so on may have deliberative and/or opinion forming powers. In the United States for example, the conservative Christian right was considerably successful in concentrating its efforts in local government organizations, particularly school boards, to implement its objectives. Within the administration of government agencies, Fraser (1989) already gives some examples of how individuals and groups "may locate some space for maneuver" by modifying administrative interpretations of needs, circumventing procedures, or by resisting particular interpretations through narrative conventions.

The courts or judicial branch represent another component of the State where groups struggling over needs interpretations may wage their disputes. Landmark decisions by the United States Supreme Court concerning desegregation and abortion rights are examples of the successes certain groups had in strategically directing their struggle to the judiciary branch. Thus, the executive, legislative and judiciary branches on the municipal, state and federal level as well as councils, boards and other government agencies could all be included within the rubric of the 'State' but represent differing contexts and conditions for needs disputes.

Therefore, oppositional groups must choose the best alternatives within the State for influencing decision making in favor of their goals. These decisions are often based on the particular make-up of the State agency or organization, the ability of group members to reach and influence such organizations and on the perceived importance these changes will have in fulfilling the needs of the members of the group. If we take these variables and multiply them by the differing types of States, structured along distinct ideological, cultural and historical

grounds, we have the innumerable variances that could occur within the struggle for need interpretation among States. Thus, when analyzing the social movements of a particular State, it is important to recognize the generally accepted role that the State is perceived to have (social democratic, welfare, socialistic, etc,) and the differing decision-making components within that State structure.

Beyond these basic structures, one finds other State components that have influenced the struggle of oppositional groups. In most postcolonial States, social movements have had to deal directly with issues of military occupation, repressive military government regimes and police abuses. The identification of needs (freedom from torture; lack of censorship, increased security) and strategies (escaping censor through the use of word games; passive demonstrations by mothers in front of the presidential palace; underground armed resistance groups) have been developed based on the functioning of State repressive forces. However, these concerns are not limited to postcolonial States. For instance the consequences of the totalitarian regimes of the not-so-distant past on the German, Italian and Japanese population are still being analyzed. Although the United States did not experience a repressive military regime, McCarthyism acted as a severe threat to democratic processes and succeeded in silencing a generation of intellectuals and activists. The interventionist activities of the United States military in Korea, Vietnam and later Panama, Grenada, Iraq, Somalia and the former-Yugoslavia have brought out questions within the United States of military spending versus social spending, the lasting effects of battle on military soldiers, the destructive effects on citizens of other countries, the hegemonic global dominance of United States policies, and so on.[11]

In terms of internal repressive forces, police violence against minority groups within the United States and the death sentence are issues that continue to be debated. One could also question the effects of immigration policies on immigrants (legal or illegal) in the United States and Europe and the repressive means police have used to repress these populations.

[11] At this writing, the destruction of the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings has brought into the forefront a series of issues regarding United States internal security, international 'terrorism,' the United States global military position; conflict between Israel and Palestine; and the relation of the United States and Europe with the Arab States.

More specific to the issue of domestic violence, the blatant racism of the Los Angeles police department was a key factor in the O.J. Simpson trial cited in chapter 1.

Thus when discussing the 'State,' oppositional groups have defined their needs and developed strategies based on the dominant contextual understanding of what the functions of a 'State' should be. They have waged their battles with or against the State at several levels of government decision making: the executive, juridical or legislative branches at the municipal, state or federal level. They have also chosen to identify particular government agencies, councils or boards where they could articulate and influence changes. Finally, I have argued that repressive forces in the form of the military, police, immigration officials and so on, also constitute an arm of the 'State' that must be included in a model of need interpretation.

In other words, before we can begin to analyze the struggle over need interpretation within the *Estado* of Brazil, we must have some understanding of the specific context from which discourses arise. Therefore, I find it necessary to include within Fraser's model, a context descriptive section that would aid us in comprehending the forms of relationships, hierarchical structures, the conceptions people have of the State, its components and other organizations, the means which are available for oppositional groups to place their claims, and so on. Without such a description, we run the risk of attempting to fit previously determined ideas about social and political relationships onto a different mold, thereby distorting our analysis and also losing the opportunity to learn about other possible forms of organization.

When examining the context beyond the components of the State, other institutions or groups may take the foreground. Within the context of a late capitalistic welfare State, Fraser identifies the economic and domestic as two institutions that have the tendency to privatize needs; however, I think it necessary to add the 'religious' as a third privatizing institution. Within late capitalistic welfare states, religious choice is guaranteed as a 'right' and a 'private' matter and is theoretically separated from official political decision-making and administrative processes, although religious organizations are free to organize as interest groups. However, as the economic and domestic realms often straddle the line between private and public, so religious organizations and religious arguments may attempt to politicize an issue through recall to what they consider to be higher principles and traditions.

Religious organizations have been instrumental in developing public policies even within such secular states as the United States and Germany. The Christian Democratic Party of Germany for instance, continues to articulate Christianity as representative of the German population despite a large number of non-Christian immigrants. In the United States, the power of the religious right was clearly effective in delegitimizing the Clinton administration; although Clinton made recourse to the privatizing effects of the religious and domestic realms by arguing that his relationship with a White House intern was an issue that should remain between him and his family and God. Abortion, female sexuality and school curriculum continue to be issues of interest for religiously oriented groups in various countries. The conflicts between Christians in Ireland or among Moslem, Christian and Jewish people in Israel obviously play a role in the political organization of the State and the options available for oppositional groups. Other examples could be cited. Thus, a fuller analysis of how religious groups have affected the development of social movements and the role of the State would be of interest within a model of needs interpretation. I will later argue that the role of such groups is vital in the analysis of social movements within the Brazilian context.

Beyond these institutional components it is necessary to recognize and present a general discussion of the diverse and hierarchical relationships based on geographical, ethnic/racial, class and gender lines which condition the strategies available for making claims, characterize the available publics, and determine, to a large degree, the very structure and role of the State. In chapter 1, for instance, I argued that violence must be understood as multidimensional phenomena, as the convergence of merging forms of oppression. Since cultural relationships are not a given, we cannot assume that relationships of dominance and oppression are the same in all countries. A historical contextual analysis of the cultural and social milieu of a particular nation could help us to understand the various features of oppression, the identities that were formed, the types and the availability of discursive resources and so on within a given context, thus providing insights into how social movements act.

Finally, Fraser's model must be expanded to include international dialogue and communication. This means that we must include space within the model for the analysis of international interventions, agreements and influence among nations and international bodies within the political processes of a particular society. But international interactions go beyond

formal agreements and negotiations. To fully appreciate the interconnection between States we must also analyze how international and intercultural contacts influence the identification of needs, the incorporation of idiomatic paradigms, the available communicative resources, the conditions for oppositional strategies, the justifications given by dominating discourses, the formation of identities and so on. In other words, the model must be placed within a larger global framework in order to perceive international interaction on the concrete, communicative and symbolic level.

Thus, in adapting Fraser's model for an intercultural examination of the women's movement against violence in Brazil, I have seen the need to make a few modifications. I have also argued that these modifications could shed light on the dynamics of late capitalistic welfare states. In general, I find it necessary to include a context descriptive section. Within this section it is necessary to recognize the generally accepted understanding of the role of the State, its several decision-making components and how they function. I have argued that by dissecting the State into its various parts, we can better trace the struggles of social movements. Also, I have called for an explicit description of the role of the repressive state forces and have added religious institutions alongside the domestic and economic. A context descriptive section must also include an analysis of the forms of cultural organizations, hierarchies, and relations of domination and subordination within a particular State, which would explain how it is that groups come to certain interpretations and how the discursive resources are made available. Finally, I have stressed the need for an international framework that would include not only concrete interactions between countries and international bodies but also communicative and symbolic influences. In making these alterations I have shown how they might also be useful in uncovering processes not only within postcolonial States but also within late capitalistic welfare States.

Besides offering us a framework by which to analyze the public disputes concerning violence against women in Brazil, Fraser's model offers us a reference by which we can compare the Brazilian process with that of the late capitalistic welfare States. Since it has been the contributions from the northern capitalistic welfare States which have dominated the discourse on violence against women, feminism and communication theory, the juxtaposition of the Brazilian movement against violence on this model could provide not only insights into the

Brazilian context but could challenge and question the northern understanding of these issues and processes. The analysis of the Brazilian context could exemplify these points and offer new perspectives on using Fraser's model for countries in some ways similar to Brazil (the Latin American countries for example).

I will discuss in the next chapter the historical political context from which the Brazilian institutions emerged, the role of the State, the cultural norms which permeate public and private relations and the general political scenario which led to the development of women's groups and the struggle against violence in the private sphere. This analysis is necessary in order to reduce the possibility of skewed and distorted interpretation and could provide a basis for further suggestions on how the model could be both amplified and fine-tuned.

CHAPTER 3

DISCOURSES ON BRAZIL: THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S CONTEXTS

If a country is not old enough to be venerated
or rich enough to represent itself,
at least it needs to be interesting.

Nina Rodrigues (1894)

It is a country that stimulates the thought of imagining
that an identity – 'to be someone or something' –
does not necessarily imply being 'one' inside.

Rubem Cesar Fernandes (1988)

This chapter will focus on various discourses and interpretations of the Brazilian context as it relates to women. In line with our understanding of intercultural communication, countries must be understood within the global context of asymmetric power relations and in their multiplicity according to their historical development. Within the area of international relations, discourses on 'emerging' or 'industrialized' nations often produce stereotyped and simplified caricatures so that reciprocal dialogue and understanding between people are gravely hindered.

I have shown how terms such as the 'State' or the 'political' cannot be understood as standardized notions valid for all situations, but rather historically, politically and socially constructed concepts often referring to different political dynamics. Thus, before entering into an analysis of the Brazilian women's movement against violence, it is important to discuss the historic foundations of the Brazilian context, its relationship with other countries and how certain concepts and practices developed particular and unique connotations according to contextual contingencies.

In line with our discussion in the previous chapter, I will focus on discourses and interpretations of the Brazilian context. It is not within the limits of this chapter to give a full

and intricate description of Brazilian reality as if such a thing could actually be done. Discourse theories have taught us that what we consider to be real and factual is most often based on the ideological discourses of the day and one's experiences of 'reality' are determined to a large degree by the social position one has within a particular context. Therefore, while running the obvious risk of excluding some discursive positions, I will present a selective summary of the discourses which laid the foundations for the current understanding of the various components of our model of need interpretation within the Brazilian context, which demonstrate intercultural interactions, and which influenced and shaped the organization of the Brazilian women's movement against violence.

Finally, I will focus particularly on the diversity of contexts and differences among women in Brazil. I have already indicated how differences among women have shaped their experiences and interpretations of violence. Before entering into the analysis of the movement against violence in Brazil, it is important to recognize the multiple contextual variations that are found within this nation-State. Therefore, this chapter traces the dominant discourses based on geographic, political, social, religious, military, ethnic and gender ideologies that emerged from Brazil or were projected onto Brazil, where they were reinterpreted and reflected back, resulting in a grouping of discourses, sometimes overlapping, often times contradictory that attempt to construct the Brazilian 'reality.'

Geographic Diversity versus Geopolitical and Colonial Discourses

The country of Brazil expands over almost half of the South American continent making it the fifth largest country in the world with the fifth largest population of approximately 170 million people (IBGE 2000). In comparison with other multicultural countries such as India, Russia, and South Africa, the Brazilian population could be considered relatively homogeneous. Except for a diminishing number of Amerindian tribes and some secluded communities of immigrants, Brazilians are united by a common language and, although many religions are practiced in Brazil, most of the population still identify themselves as Roman Catholic. Miscegenation rather than racial separatism has been tolerated and even encouraged by the government. The power relations which have developed along racial/ethnic and class lines have resulted in a uniquely Brazilian form of

social interaction which is quite different from the forms of strict racial segregation which occurred in other colonized countries. Although language, religion and miscegenation appear to unite Brazilians, it would be erroneous to think that such a vast territory, encompassing several climatic and vegetation regions and populated by people originating from Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and other South American countries as well as by the Amerindian tribes, would produce a homogeneous cultural group.

Discourses concerning geographic conditions coupled with sociological projections and internal politics have formed a means by which Brazilians interpret and identify themselves and how others see them.[1] The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics has somewhat arbitrarily classified the Brazilian territory into five major regions: North; Northeast; Southeast; South; and Center-West. These classifications are widely used in Brazil, be it within the school geography class, on the weather report, or in the description of tourist packages to describe the different geographic and cultural regions within the country.

Although primarily used to describe geographic and climactic conditions, it does not take a stretch of the imagination to deduce that these differences might include variations in access to resources and information, to political involvement, or to economic opportunities; or that they might influence a woman's relationship to the State, to her community or to her immediate relationships with men and women.

These regions vary widely, from the industrial 'rust belt' of the southeast to the Amazon forests of the north; from the drought plagued *sertão* of the northeast to the southern high-quality-of-life model cities; from the densely populated regions of the southeast to the sparsely populated expanses of the central-west; from the Brazilian blend of the African *iorubá* religion in the northeast to the *caipira* rodeo culture in the southeastern and central-western inland regions; from the German architecture and the *gaúcho* culture of the south to the diversified Amerindian reservations of the central-west and north. This vast territory covering several climactic and geographic regions and populated by peoples of differing cultures has not always been fully appreciated in the literature about Brazil and in Brazil.

[1] When I refer to geographic factors I do not limit myself to the study of topographical changes on the earth's surface but rather how these factors conjugate with human social, political and cultural organization.

Geographic Constructions

Upon the initial colonization of Brazil by the Portuguese, strategic and geographic contingencies produced a situation in which the vast territory of Brazil was divided into two major regions in the minds of the Portuguese: the coast and the interior. Due to fear of losing their territory to invaders, the Portuguese crown strategically ordered the settling of the long coastline. The fertile soil along the coast, together with the difficulties encountered by the early colonizers in reaching the interior due to the steep slope and lack of navigable rivers resulted in the concentration of the colonial population along the coast (Roett 1992), and later allowed for the unrestricted expanse of plantations in the interior.[2] This division is still relevant in the way that current politics and demographics have merged to produce a dualistic image of a multi-faceted nation.

Most of the urban centers are located along or near the coast while recent policies aimed at settling the interior, such as relocating the national capital to Brasilia and providing incentives to settle the central-west have been met with mixed reactions (Roett 1992). The large cities on or near the coast are regarded as the cultural centers of the country due to the number of well-known universities, international cultural events, and opportunities for employment. The coast is home to large industry based on a global capitalistic economy where competition, efficiency and the use of high technology are essential.

For the most part, 'interior' in the Brazilian context (often translated as 'hinterlands') refers to the vast and differentiated space of land located inland from the coast, ranging from the deserts of the northeast, the cattle ranches and wet lands of the central-west, the agricultural regions of the south and southeast, and the Amazon rainforest. Sociologically (and stereotypically) it refers to areas where people are more traditional and maintain regional cultural practices and festivals, where there is a general lack of access to information, educational and professional opportunities, and where people have been less touched by social and political changes. In political and economic terms, the rural interior is considered to be the stronghold of the plantation owning oligarchy, operating on what has

[2] See Holanda 1995 for a comparison between Spanish colonization which favored the settling of the interior regions with that of Portuguese colonization in the Americas.

been compared to a feudal system due to its provincial and paternalistic qualities and the web of relationships based on family relationships, favoritisms and loyalties.

Therefore, the largely semantic coast/interior dualism, lacking in real descriptive power, has set the stage for other dualisms – developed/undeveloped; capitalistic/feudal; urban/rural; cosmopolitan/provincial; political/private – that have molded political analyses. For instance, issues regarding the interior of Brazil, especially in regards to agrarian reform have been systematically repressed (Medeiros 1989). The description of rural work relationships as feudal or semi-feudal rather than capitalistic, even by the left, facilitated the demarcation of the private/public line to incorporate landless peasants within the private interests of plantation owners. In this way, oppressive tactics against peasants were justified in terms of 'agrarian peace' and 'order and tranquility.' The organization of the Peasant Leagues in the early 1960s, whose discourse broke through the private property rhetoric and focused on political interests, was within a short period effectively repressed (Benevides 1985). The military takeover in 1964 was justified in part by the growing mobilization of peasants and the threat that President Goulart would allow the confiscation of private lands. International support, particularly from the United States, was offered in order to secure the Brazilian exportation of primary products, but justified in the 'threat of international communism' (Benevides 1985). Expropriation of subsistence farms by large landowners backed by the police or their own militias since 1964 has caused violent conflicts in areas where there has been no or little government intervention or public debate (CNDM 1987; Medeiros 1989; Souza 1997). Current estimates are that 58,000 estates make up about 45 percent of the total farmable land while about three million farms share only 2 percent (Souza 1997). The large landowners have held considerable power in national politics, consequently discussion of agricultural reform has remained taboo up until recently.

It has been the urban problems caused by the mass exodus of people from the rural interior to the urban coast that has been the focus of political movements, rather than the causes for such an exodus. Issues concerning urban violence, lack of infrastructure, industrial wages and benefits, health care and daycare services have been the primary concerns of oppositional groups. The emergence of the influential Partido dos Tabalhadores – PT (Worker's Party) in the 1970s, which grew out of the workers union in the industrialized car

manufacturing region of São Bernardo do Campo just outside São Paulo, forced the claims of industrial workers to the national arena and has become the strongest oppositional party.[3]

Rural violence and the confiscation of subsistence farms and the abuses of farmworkers have remained until recently in the background. Only within the last 15 years the Movimento Sem Terra – MST (Landless Movement) has gained national recognition and the issue of agrarian reform has reached the level of national debate. The MST remains one of the few organizations actively working for land reform in Brazil and has adopted a confrontational stance against the State and the large landowners by invading agricultural land and demanding the right to form cooperatives (Stédile 1997). Socialistic reform, taxation, militarization of landholdings, property rights, rural violence and so on, are some of the topics brought out in discussions concerning land reform. Thus, issues regarding the 'interior' have definitely reached the Brazilian 'social arena' but due to their volatile and sensitive nature, they will not likely be resolved in the near future (see Gohn 1997; 2000).

Another related issue involving the 'interior' has been the debate concerning the fate of the Amazon. Except for a few sporadic occurrences (the rubber boom before WWI; the building of the famous opera house in Manaus; the visit by Roosevelt in 1912; the interest shown by anthropologists, botanists and adventurers) the Amazon was left to its own until the middle of the 20th century. The military regime saw the Amazon as a 'safety-valve' whereby the problems of agrarian reform would be resolved by fostering migration to settle the woodlands. Programs of road building, slash-and-burn agriculture, private get-rich-quick initiatives, the construction of large dams followed with the ambitious transamazonic highway have had mixed results (Skidmore 1988). In this attempt to secure and settle the area for economic production, most of the governmental policies were allied with the interests of large plantation owners and national and international mining and lumber interests. Violence between small landowners and the various Amerindian tribes has resulted.

During the period of political transition to a democratic government in the 1970s and early 1980s, environmental discourses arose in Brazil and internationally that argued that the Amazon be considered an 'international resource' since its destruction would kill the

[3] See Rainho (1980) and Morel (1981) for a closer look at the organization of the unions and Worker's party. See Lobo (1992) for a focus on the struggle of women industrial workers.

remaining Amerindian tribes, damage the ozone layer, wipe out important species and disrupt the ecological balance. The Sarney government (1985-1990) interpreted these discourses as intrusive 'international meddling' in internal Brazilian affairs while the military continued to support the 'development' of the Amazon and secure its riches for Brazil rather than for international interests. During the Collor presidency (1990-1992) steps were taken to slow the rate of deforestation and to reserve a homeland for the Yanomami (the largest isolated tribe in the Americas). This was seen as somewhat of a surprise due to Collor's ties to the conservative oligarchy and his nationalistic rhetoric. His motives for doing so were interpreted by some as an attempt to regain international clout for loan, trade and investment policies which were suffering interference by constant criticism from international ecologists (see Roett 1997). The current Cardoso government has agreed to work bilaterally with the United States on environmental issues and also patrol the frontier in order to control the drug traffic, which represents yet another issue that has come into focus in the last years concerning the interior. However, despite the signing of documents and international pressures, the actual control and supervision of the destruction of the rainforest and the traffic of drugs is far from efficient (Roett 1997).

The interior/coast dualism created a context in which interior issues were largely disregarded in public debates benefiting the large landowning oligarchy and the exploitation efforts for resources. Consequently, the situations of women and violence against women in the 'interior' have not become major discursive issues. Rather, the discourses on women have focused on the needs of urban women, particularly those living in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro and the strategies developed have been based on urban conditions. However, since the end of the military regime, academics, journalists and feminists have begun to study the differing political and social contexts within the various states and cities of the 'interior,' which have provided a hint of how women live out their lives.

In regards to violence against women, journalistic approaches such as Dimenstein's (1993) have denounced the prostitution rings in the Amazon which have flown women and adolescents into isolated rubber collecting sites where the only possible way to leave (escape) is by helicopter. A State and internationally funded report has documented child prostitution in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul (IBISS/MS 1997); The National Council for Women's

Rights – CNDM (1987) has documented rural violence against women and children by police and militia groups; and M. Alvarez and D'Incao (1995) describes the specific contexts of women working within the Amazon. These are a few examples of growing attempts to present the multiple contexts as well as differentiate the forms of violence that women experience.

From the above examples we can conclude that geographic factors alone provide enough evidence against any hegemonic concept of women's conditions in Brazil and that the interior/coast divide has simplified and distorted this multiple reality. However it is not only the internal geographic categories that have framed political discourse about Brazil, but also colonialist discourses and geopolitics which have positioned Brazil within a global framework.

Colonialist Discourses and Geopolitics

From the early years of colonization, the primary importance of the Brazilian territory for the Portuguese crown was the profit made in the commercialization of its natural abundance. Unlike India and other Asian colonies, there was no complex commercial trade system in the Brazilian colony that offered finished goods. Initially in search of gold, the Portuguese explorers found brazilwood; however, it was the plantation and industrialization of sugar and later cotton, coffee, cacao, coffee and the mining of gold in Brazil which strengthened foreign trade (Furtado 1991). Later on, the Portuguese, unable to administrate the trade, became little more than intermediaries for the British Empire, which reaped great benefits particularly from the gold mining. Upon Brazilian independence, other countries, such as he United States, Holland, and Germany would step in to harvest the natural resources while industrial development lagged and Brazil, as well as most of Latin America, became 'dependent' on Europe and the United States for financial resources and industrial products (Freyre 1980).

Discourses developed in Europe during the colonial era concerning the climate and geography of Brazil and other colonies provided for the Europeans a means by which they could measure themselves and their civilization. It is not surprising that, for the most part,

these accounts resulted in a positive overestimation of European civilization and a negative evaluation of the colonies, thereby justifying the European position of colonizers. Arguments based on a pseudo-scientific analysis of the Brazilian terrain and climate suggested that the excessive abundance of natural resources, vegetation, rivers, and fertile soil restricted human development, repressed thinking and thwarted ambition. Based on these analyses, European scholars concluded that no highly developed society could be found in Brazil, but rather an ignorant, weak, apathetic and barbarous group of aborigines. Even European settlers could not offset the detrimental effects of the geographic conditions, for they were able to introduce only an imperfect copy of European culture (Sodré 1984).

These ideas, while scientifically erroneous, were internalized by Brazilians intellectuals. Sílvio Romero, an influential Brazilian intellectual of the 1880s, even while criticizing the precision of this account accepted most of its conclusions. Romero made a long list of the negative characteristics he attributed to the Brazilian people: intellectual abatement, superficiality, irritability, nervousness, tiredness and so on which he considered to be a result of the climate and geography (cited in Mota 1980). These ideas resulted from colonialist ideology, which would position Brazil and other colonized lands as culturally inferior to the colonizers and would be reflected in the works of Brazilian authors.[4]

The description of Brazil was homogenized into an all-encompassing tropical rainforest consequently excluding the geographic diversity of this large nation. Sodré (1984) points out that these ideas, starting with the climate and expanding to include the inhabitants and culture, were not merely descriptive but comparative. There was a judgement of good and bad, superior and inferior juxtaposed on these differences resulting in the following constellations: cold climate – Arian – intelligent – superior; warm climate – non-Arian – unintelligent – inferior. This ideology would justify the colonization as well as the economic dependence of the ex-colonies even after political independence, and it would also provide a universal reference whereby cultures should compare themselves.

Later the ideology of progress and development transposed the notion of biological development found in Darwinist evolutionary theory to the social and international arena and

[4] Sodré (1984) takes the works of five Brazilians intellectuals and analyzes how each reflected differing phases of subordination to imported ideas from the dominating nations of their time, resulting in a negative evaluation of Brazil and an internalized perception of subalternity.

set up means by which civilizations could achieve perfectibility based on European and North American standards. The conjugation of development theory with Calvinist rationalism (see Weber 1920) in the United States produced such concepts as 'manifest destiny' giving the United States messianic importance within the evolution of human civilization. According to these theories, societies followed certain determined and natural stages progressively leading to democratic capitalism.[5] While 'advanced' capitalist states were held up as examples of development, the 'needy' countries of Latin America were seen as requiring outside 'aid' which came in the form of capital, technology and education (Puiggrós 1994). Idioms such as 'primitive', 'backward', 'underdeveloped', followed by 'developing,' 'peripheral,' and 'emerging' would put the United States and Europe as reference points to measure the development or lack thereof of the 'ex-colonies' or the 'third world.'

However, anti-colonialist, independent and critical discourses and movements have developed in Brazil in opposition to these assumptions. Whereas the Inconfidência Mineira was the most prominent of them during the 18th century, new geopolitical discourses arose after Independence from Portugal in 1822 (Fausto 1996). The first of such discourses was articulated mainly by the founding Father José Bonifácio, who stressed the need for the construction of an autonomous and unified State, based on the fusion of fragmented parts. Later on, at the time of the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, a new geopolitical discourse was brought forward by military positivism, which was able to express its evolutionary ideology in the motto chosen for the Brazilian flag: 'Order and Progress' (Corrêa, A.E. 1997).

Well into the 20th century, this ideology of progress and its geopolitical corollaries were translated into the language of development and nationalism, which were radically expressed during the dictatorship of the populist President Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945). Developmentalist theories, particularly prominent in Brazil from the 1940s and continuing as a global ideology until the present, were interwoven into the 'nationalist' ideology. One of the most sophisticated articulations of nationalism and developmentalism came out of the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB – Superior Institute of Brazilian Studies),

[5] W. Rostow (1965) divides progress into three phases: initial phase (traditional and preindustrial societies); transitional phase; final, ideal phase (industrial or late capitalist societies)

which proposed economic independence from dominating countries by converging cultural nationalism, development and Christian existentialism (Paiva 1980). This provided the ideological basis not only for the sociological work of Helio Jaguaribe (1972) and the historical research of Nelson Werneck Sodré (1964), but also for the methodology of basic education developed by Paulo Freire (1970) in the 1960s, as well as for the Christian base communities and Liberation Theology. Interesting to note, many of these ideas that were developed in Brazil at this time were based on ideas stemming from French Catholic theology and German existentialism (Paiva 1980).

After the Vargas era the Kubitschek government sought to 'develop' Brazil with the motto "50 year in 5" and attempted to develop the 'interior' with the transferring of the national capitol to the newly constructed ultra-modern city of Brasilia. Amidst these competing discourses, many social scientists such as Celso Furtado (1974;1980) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (see Cardoso & Falleto 1974) have questioned some of the non-dialectical assumptions concerning economic development made by European theorists. The theoretical model which presupposes that each nation passes through the historical stages of slavery, feudalism and capitalism has been criticized by Brazilian scholars who argue that this model does not provide an appropriate tool to understanding the Brazilian experience (Furtado 1991; Prado Jr.1980; Cardoso 1962). They affirm that to consider the organization of large plantations supported by slaves as part of the slavery stage or feudal stage is to misrepresent the colonial/commercial nature of this period and the interrelationships of subsequent periods. At the time of Brazilian colonization, the European economic system was changing from a feudal system to commercial capitalism and the Brazilian territory was developed as an exporter of raw materials in accord with this general global context. The development model places all countries in separate spheres, as if they were developing along their own speed without any interconnection or interdependence. On the contrary, as an exporter of primary materials, Brazil played a well-defined role in the international system of capitalism, which was emerging during the time of colonialism (Prado Jr.1980).

Later discourses of liberation theology and dependence theory critiqued the developmentalist ideology. Dussel (1996) for example, brought together these two theories to point out that if we take the European or North American model of modernity and

development as a process which follows a straight line of development, then we have to admit that more than 80 percent of the globe (Africa, Asia and Latin America) is developmentally 'delayed,' and 'peripheral.' In relationship to 'late' capitalism, peripheral capitalism is a 'before' on the road to development. However, Dussel argues that this 'before' is rather an 'underneath': it is not for the underdeveloped to become 'developed,' 'late,' or 'center' but to continue to be the exploited and dominated origin of stolen wealth accumulated in the 'center' (Dussel 1996, p. 5). Following this line of thought, Dussel provides not only a look at Latin America but also at Europe. Before 1492 Europe was a cultural province in relationship to the Arab world, with colonization, Europe would acquire its planetary 'central' position possible only in relationship to a 'peripheral other' (Dussel 1994 cited in Castro-Gómez 1996).[6]

On the other hand, postcolonialist theorists, who have incorporated the postmodernist critique of totalizing assumptions, have taken a closer look at the works of Dussel and other Latin American philosophers and exposed some of their homogenizing aspects. Castro-Gómez (1996) for example, argues that while providing a critique of imperialism and oppression, these thinkers have incorporated universal ideas about Europe and Latin America into their discourses. Dualisms such as center/periphery, oppressor/oppressed, I/other have produced simplified versions of entire continents thereby utilizing the universalist categories they intended to criticize. Liberation Theology has, for instance, positioned Latin America as showing the way for the liberation of all humanity while Marxist theory has put messianic importance on the working class. Such discourses failed to include the intertwining of relationships beyond class lines, such as gender, ethnicity and religion, or explain for the fact that many of those who suffered imprisonment, torture and exile during the military regimes were intellectuals, students and artists of middle-class origin.

Other types of international rhetoric have produced a number of categories to define Brazil's position within the 'international order.' Interestingly enough, these categories use largely geographic terms. The geopolitical division during the cold war divided the world into two mutually exclusive fronts: east/west. Although these categories referred first to the

[6] This critique of Eurocentrism was not limited to Latin American intellectuals. A few other well-known examples are Said 1978; Spivak 1988, 1987 and H. Bhabha 1994. For a critical discussion on the concept of 'development' see P.V. Dias (in print).

position of the then Soviet Union within eastern Europe and Asia in contrast to the western European nations, they were mostly ideological constructs and were understood as standing for capitalism, democracy and freedom versus communism and totalitarianism.[7] Other countries of the world were then divided up on each side of the equation. With the Cuban Revolution and the growing socialist or communist agenda of many leftist groups in Latin America, the United States government and military along with other US businesses in Latin America and a growing number of Latin Americans interpreted these movements as definitely fitting into the 'east' side of the balance.

The doctrine of national security within the framework of geopolitics became a major ideological force within the Brazilian military.[8] The ideology of geopolitics that emerged from the Pan-Germanic movement in Europe was later adopted by the United States and exported to Latin American countries. Under this framework the entire force of the nation, including the activities of its citizens and institutions and even its economic development was aimed at achieving national security (Tollefson 1991). In Latin America in the 1960s 'total war' was called against what was identified as the chief enemy of national security – communism (the east). Although the Soviet Union was identified as the major leader of the communist world, Marxist infiltration, that is, the citizens themselves were identified as potential enemies of the State.[9] The fear of communist intervention and eventual takeover by 'subversive' groups and individuals was used to justify the military coup of 1964. The United States supported the coup and provided the regime with substantial economic and military aid with the justification that such a response was necessary to stamp out growing communist infiltration which would eventually destroy the security of the nation (Skidmore 1988). Thus, the international discourses based on the east/west divide definitely influenced the events leading to and in support of the 20 years of military government in Brazil (see Purcell 1997).

Many Latin Americans interpreted their Marxist movements as coming out of nationalistic reactions to poverty and inequalities rather than expansionistic interventions by Moscow (Purcell 1997). Intellectuals in an attempt to break through the cold war ideology of

[7] Raymond Williams (1983) traces the origins of the East-West distinction to the Roman Empire to separate the worlds of Christianity and Islam.
[8] Couto e Silva (1967) is generally considered to be the classic work on Brazilian geopolitics.

west versus east contested with the paradigm of north versus south by which problems of imperialism and economic exploitation would take the foreground instead of dominant geopolitical discourse of democracy/capitalism versus totalitarianism/communism. Within this paradigm, Brazil would fit within the south as a country dominated by imperialism and exploited economically. This argument held that the east/west paradigm was used as a tool for exploitation, as an excuse given by Europe and the United States to economically dominate other countries.

Once again dualistic categories fail to give precise descriptions and often mystify more than explain. The nation-State of Brazil as one of the top ten wealthiest nations provides a major challenge to simple dichotomies. How can one label a country that holds significant economic power within the world market, that exports highly complex technology, but is dependent on international loans and where high standards of education and health care are reserved only for a small portion of the population while a significant number live in the most precarious situations?

The symbolic significance of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet Union, the return to democratic elections in Brazil and other Latin American countries have changed the focus of geopolitical discourses. Currently the idiom of 'globalization' has produced a paradigmatic shift in international politics. With the expanse of the globalization process, the division between north and south; developed/undeveloped; east/west have lost their descriptive power.[10] When a single product is made from the raw-materials of one country, partially processed in a second, using the design model developed in yet a third country, shipped to a fourth for final assembly and distributed primarily within a fifth country, the concepts of 'center' and 'periphery' dissolve (Fausto1996). With the breakdown of the Soviet Union the primary ideological basis for the East/West conflict lost its substance. Brazil's integration into the Common Market of the South (Mercosul) with Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, despite problems, demonstrates increased commercial exchange

[9] See Comblin (1984) for a more detailed account of the national security doctrine and the ideology of geopolitics.

[10] Coronil (1998) with ironic humor discusses the metaphoric attributes of the east/west division and postulates if Los Angeles can be described as the capital of the third world due to its large number of immigrants and if Japan could be considered a western nation holding 'honorary European status,' than perhaps Columbus was correct in his assumption of having discovered the East when arriving on the American continent.

among countries of the Southern Hemisphere and the attempt to build a united front in relationship to other associations in Europe and North America. On a worldwide scale, Brazil has gained a voice within the international political arena largely due to its emerging economic power (Purcell 1997). For instance, Henry Kissenger, in an article (reprinted in the Estado de São Paulo 2001) underlining the importance of negotiating the agreement of the Free Trade Area of the Americas – FTAA for the United States economy, considers Brazil to play a pivotal geopolitical role and encourages the United States government to develop bilateral and regional trade agreements with Brazil. We can, therefore, conclude that the perception of Brazil's geopolitical position has changed as well.

However, we cannot neglect noticing the dualistic geographic and geopolitical notions such as east/west; north/south; coast/interior; tropical/temperate; center/periphery; communist/democratic; poor/rich; dependent/independent; first/third that have shaped notions of development, modernization, international relationships and so on. Dualistic thinking of this type has produced contexts that have negatively affected the lives of Brazilian women. Within these dichotomies Brazilian women, as an undifferentiated whole, are grouped along with all other women of 'third world' countries despite obvious cultural differences. They are seen as traditional instead of modern, exotic and sensual, non-educated according to 'western' norms, and in need of protection from their uncivilized 'macho' (primitive, unenlightened) men (see Rai & Lievesley 1996).

One consequence of these stereotypes is the sex tourism and mail-order bride offers that have played on these images, enticing men to search for these supposedly more submissive, sensual women. On the other side of the coin, Brazilian women with stereotyped visions of wealth in Europe and the United States present themselves according to these images, in hopes of improving their economic situation (Agisra 1990; Prestello & Dias 1996). Brazilian women could also be identified as potentially subversive, untrustworthy and heavily influenced by subversive propaganda. For instance, women as well as men suffered torture and exile from the military dictatorship, which based its actions on geopolitical discourses (Teles 1993; Alvarez 1990). Yet another result of such compromising ideologies is that Brazilian women have suffered subaltern status within the scientific community, where

research and publications coming from the 'north' have been more readily received and disputed then those coming from the 'south.'

I have argued that not only discourses based on hegemonic ideologies have affected the lives of Brazilian women but also geographic (demographic, vegetation, climatic, etc.) and geopolitical factors have made up a varied and complex context producing differing positions for women. My seemingly obvious argument is that Brazil has various 'Brazils' within its frontiers, each with specific characteristics. These 'Brazils' are not isolated singular entities, but produce a hierarchical web of relationships and interdependencies, while dualistic simplifications obscure these complexities and produce stereotypes that have harmful consequences.

The discussion of geopolitical classifications is, however, one line of argumentation to reveal the complexities within the understandings of the women's situation in Brazilian history and culture. Class, ethnic/racial and religious categories are also cited as factors that influence women's experiences not only in Brazil but also internationally. The issue of class inequalities has emerged as a principle discursive topic and has until recently obscured the articulation of other differences. I have found that intimately connected to the topic of class formation is the understanding of the Brazilian State. Therefore, I will now offer a historical sampling of discursive interpretations by differing interest groups that have constructed the notion of the Brazilian State and indicate other discursive structures in society which affect the understanding of the diversity and particularities of Brazilian women's positions.

Diversity of Discursive Structures in a Patrimonial State

In the following discussion I will show the historical development of the understanding of concepts such as 'private' and 'public,' and identify other State or social structures that have played an important role in State formation and Brazilian identity. Through an internal discursive analysis of class differences in a patrimonial State, I will identify those social structures that I feel need to be added to Fraser's model in order to broaden our understanding of the Brazilian State structure; namely, the Church and other religious organizations, and

Repressive State forces. In line with our framework of intercultural communication, international interests and interconnections will continue to be made explicit.

Class Differences in a Patrimonial State

From the time of colonization to the present, large income disparities and high indexes of poverty have characterized the economic conditions of the Brazilian population as a whole. Over the last years, Brazil has consistently been ranked among the 10 wealthiest nations in the world according to its gross national product (PNUD 1998). However, its per capita income and quality of life indicators position Brazil in less favorable situations than neighboring countries such as Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. Moreover, the quotient between the income of the wealthiest 20% of the population and the poorest 20% of the population is higher than any other country analyzed by the United Nations Report on Human Development (PNUD 1999). Regional inequalities are also clearly defined: the percentage of poverty in the North and Northeast is above 40% while in the South, Southeast and Central-West it ranges from 20 to 25%. In rural regions poverty reaches almost 40% of the population while in the urban areas it falls to approximately 28% (PNUD 1999). Chauffeured limousines, private jets, armed guards and fortified luxury houses are a few of the amenities taken for granted by the Brazilian rich while a large portion of the population suffers from hunger, illiteracy, and lack of adequate housing.

Given this scenario, class difference has become the most cited social division in the analysis of Brazilian problems and discussion on this point has overshadowed the debate on any other category. However, it is not enough to describe the stark economic inequalities of the Brazil population without an analysis of the State and the political system. While it is certainly true that Brazil shares the unequal structures present in most colonial states and that often times the history of the Brazilian class system has been dissolved into the general history of Latin America, the particular internal politics and external relations of Brazil have shaped a unique context.[11] When talking about the emergence of a class society in Brazil, two

[11] Despite Rai & Lievesley's (1996) position that post colonial states differ, they describe three basic features of most post colonial states: the existence of nationalist elites; the influence of individuals and groups who have power outside state regulations; the development of corruption within the state (pp.15-16).

major intertwining topics emerge: internal political power structures organized by the elite over the large under-class; and the continued colonial/dependent status of Brazil within the international economic system. Depending on the particular ideological stance of the social scientist, one side may take more precedence over the other.

Most researchers agree that the roots of the present inequalities and State structure of Brazil can be found within the colonial period. The question of who had the power to draw the line between public and private plays a principle role in the historical development of the Brazilian State. I will now take a look at some of the constructed histories of the Brazilian State in order to identify some of the reoccurring themes in the understanding of the Brazilian political system.

The colonization of Brazil favored the development of a small wealthy class of landowners or oligarchy and a large mass of slaves and workers. The vast amount of land easily available, the relatively small number of men sent from Portugal, the type of crops cultivated, the need for large investments (in for example sugar refineries) and the access to a large numbers of slaves (Amerindian and later African) are factors which are cited as promoting large-scale agricultural production (Prado Jr. 1980; Holanda 1995; Wood & Carvalho 1994). The economic development of the colony produced a wealthy class of plantation owners in the midst of a poor dependent population of Amerindians, slaves, semi-free slaves, and small landowners. Thus, economic development in the Latin American colonies was based on the production of raw materials for export in collaboration with the foreign mercantile system and was characterized by the master/slave relationship (Bilac1999; Furtado 1991).

Independence from Portugal did not modify this basic political and economic structure. The elaboration of the Constitution, while based on the English and French models in vogue at the time, particularly Le Contract Social of Rousseau, occurred within a context almost opposite to that of these European nations. Rather than the result of a struggle against the feudal royalty and the large landowners by the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, in Brazil, independence was demanded by the rural oligarchy against the bourgeoisie merchants and the Crown. Therefore, independence was not the result of popular movements towards national liberty but rather a shifting of power from the Crown to the new Brazilian

government (interestingly enough, the only monarchy in Latin America) which installed a centralized bureaucratic system (Roett 1992). The new constitution gave more power to the national assembly controlled by the oligarchy, while the rights of citizenship based on wealth and property were allowed only to a small group, thereby excluding the large population of workers and slaves (Prado, Jr. 1980). Later, with the establishment of the Republic, the landed aristocracy continued to hold its influence.

In the evolution of the Brazilian political system, the elite – beginning with the rural oligarchy and later evolving into a corporativistic system – has consistently held the power to determine the line between private and public. One line of interpretation followed by social scientists is that class inequalities in Brazil are mainly the result of private influences in the public sector, more specifically, the power of the rural aristocracy in public matters. Differing idioms have been used to express the relationships developed by political bosses in the political system: clientelismo, coronelismo, mandonismo, empreguismo, personalismo and so on. This system has been traced from the Portuguese Crown whose selection of captains to settle the Brazilian territory was based on their loyalty to the Crown, which was reinforced through the granting of favors. Later this system developed within the slave agricultural economy of the rural northeast, where favors were exchanged for work and protection and kinship-type of relationships in which the ruling landowner representing the paternal figure predominated. By providing favors or in the last instance, coming down with threats, the ruling oligarchy was able to control the local population and its leaders – police chiefs, judges and politicians (Holanda 1995). Remnants of this type of relationship still persist and in some instance more modernized strategies have put new clothes on the same structures.[12] With industrialization, this patron-client relationship was transplanted to the cities where 'informal' relationships developed within the municipal systems. In this context, people in need of services perceived that their chances were better if they solicited the help of intermediaries or contacts who could influence decision making. Jobs, hospital beds, educational opportunities were not solicited in terms of formal rights, but in terms of private favors (Hutchinson 1966, cited in Oliven 1980).

[12] In a discussion with Martonio Montalverne, of Fortaleza, he used the term *coronelismo esclarecido* to denote the tendency of the oligarchy to adapt to more modern techniques, amplifying its control by purchasing universities, buying up the media and soliciting the counsel of highly sophisticated lawyers.

Likewise, in his analysis of Brazil, Holanda (1995) cites the homen cordial (cordial man) as representative of the Brazilian personalistic system. He critiques Weber (1920) in asserting that the bureaucratization of the Brazilian government did not coincide with a process of rationalization in which impersonal relationships based on objective goals were developed. Rather, the Brazilian bureaucracy developed a "patrimonial functionalism" in which personal confidences, favoritism and political interests were of key importance. Thus this type of control is personal, direct, local or provincial, informal and paternalistic and based on personal relationships of favoritism.

With industrialization in the first part of the 20th century new actors emerged within the political system and the industrialists, military, bureaucrats, and bankers were incorporated into the elite group. The oligarchy continued to dominate even though it shifted its power of rule to the industrialists and State bureaucracy (Bilac 1999). According to Faoro (1973) and reinforced by Roett (1992) the corporativistic strategy of the elites was to ensure the dominance of the State in order to maintain their own interests. The successive regimes differed in terms of which elite group would hold decision-making power during a particular period rather than in structural organization that could change the elitist nature of the State.

If the capacity of the oligarchy to exercise its private interests in public affairs is one side of the coin, the other is that the State (controlled by the corporatist elite) has been able to hold public domain of what could be otherwise considered private interests. The Brazilian blend of paternalism and cordiality with elite control produced what Foaro (1973) has called a patrimonial State. According to Foaro, the patrimonial State is characterized by the predominance of public over private power in economic and social development, areas which in other countries are often left to the private-sector. The patrimonial State is interventionist, paternalistic and authoritarian. Unlike totalitarian societies, the techniques of persuasion, tradition and co-optation have been utilized together with a flexible system that regulates rather than dominates, allowing limited political activity. Democratic institutions that model liberal democracy have been installed without changing the overall structure of dominance in which a large marginal population is easily manipulated and consequently makes few demands on the State (Roett 1992).

The surge of populism in Latin America, which coincided with industrialization, is a classic example of the patrimonial State. Populism is described by Fernando Claderón as the most "genuine creation in Latin America in the 20th century," responsible for the integration of the masses into the market economy, for urbanization and other social changes and was considered "the instrument of our complete integration in the universal and paradoxical experience of modernity" (1995 cited in Castro-Gómez 1996 p. 68). The State would assume the task of creating a repertoire of symbols and stereotypes that would be considered 'representative of cultural identity.' By exercising a paternalistic control of society, the State was able to impose a modernization process that connected all regions of the country through the construction of highways, railways, telegraphs and other types of infrastructure (Castro-Gómez 1996). The international climate reinforced the populist platform. In Europe a growing disinterest in democratic processes resulted in the victory of fascism in Italy and national-socialism in Germany coupled with material progress and optimism in the future (Mattos 1951 cited in Mota 1980).

Populism would have several faces within Latin America: the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria para America in Peru, Peronism in Argentina; the Mexican Revolution; the populist government of Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945) in Brazil. However, unique to the Brazilian case, there was no large revolutionary and massive organization of people (descamisados) but rather the paternalistic and charismatic figure of one man, who instead of ascribing to a certain ideological foundation based on notions of the 'public good,' developed a system of doling out favors for the 'clientele' or political supporters. Those who could bring in the vote were rewarded with jobs and contracts, most of which were provided within the central bureaucratic government. Vargas populism provided the State organization of labor unions and elementary educational programs within the urban areas as gifts from the State, instead of rights demanded by the population. By focusing on urban development and the benefits of industrial workers, the conditions of rural workers or the question of land reform was left unheeded, thus maintaining the balance of power between the government technocrats, the oligarchy and the military. When the populists began to infringe into this area, the mechanisms of the State structure reacted by pressuring Vargas, who opted for

suicide, and later by ousting president Goulart with the military coup of 1964 (Roett 1992; Weffort 1978; Ianni 1971).

Thus, nationalistic populism led to a military response, and the military government reacted by accelerating industrialization through the investment of foreign capital.[13] This developmental model resulted in a higher concentration of income for the upper-class and regressive wage policies and repressive measures for the underclass. It also resulted in Brazilian dependence on foreign capital and an increase in its foreign debt (Evans 1979). Thus, the nationalist project of the military to turn Brazil into an economically independent nation, on the contrary, resulted in increased foreign financial dependence. Several measures taken by the military regime, such as the promotion of capital-intensive agriculture and the concentration of manufacturing centers within the São Paulo metropolitan region, intensified the expansion of urban population growth and the exodus of many people from the agricultural regions to the urban centers (Faria V. 1983). Unable to control the economy after 20 years of rule, plagued by hyper-inflation and accusations of corruption, and pressured by the growing organization of social movements demanding a return to democratic structures, the military government was forced into opening channels for a return to democracy, in a process called abertura.

The subsequent civil presidents that were elected democratically have followed a so-called neo-liberal model, privatizing State run services and encouraging foreign investments. The current Cardoso government has been able to control run-away inflation and establish Brazil as a primary player in the global market, but has not been able to deal with problems of widespread unemployment and poverty. In fact Corrêa and Castro (2000) demonstrate that although per capita income has increased, economic inequalities have also increased, indicating an inverse relationship between economic growth and economic equality among the population. Despite the Cardoso government's discourse in favor of human rights and democratic processes (Brasil 1995;1996; 2001) it has not made substantial changes in class differences or the elite structure.

Rather than enter into the public debate to demand better services from the State, the middle- and upper-class, largely unorganized, have sought out private solutions for public

[13] See Sodré (1964) for a Marxist analysis of the conditions leading to the inevitability of a military coup.

issues. They prefer to send their children to private instead of public schools, employ private guards to watch their neighborhoods instead of relying on the police services, and build gated neighborhoods or apartment buildings, while they make their own investments for retirement and drive their own cars or rely on limousine services instead of using public transportation. For the most part, the middle- and upper-class have abandoned public institutions in Brazil rather than demanding public efficiency and quality.

However, despite the seemingly constant hold that the elite maintains in Brazilian politics and Brazil's continued 'dependency' status, there have been eruptions of protest and the construction of theoretical concepts that have questioned, pressured and changed politics as usual. Instances such as the quilombos (settlements of escaped slaves) and the civil war of 1932, in which various factions fought against dictatorial rule, have given indications that the masses have not succumbed entirely to a fate of poverty and submission or authoritarian control. In the 20th century, Liberation Theology, which combined theology with Marxism, provided another theoretical as well as practical basis to criticize foreign imperialism and internal national inequalities. By considering God to be on the 'side of the poor,' Liberation Theology placed a messianic mission on the masses of people in Latin America, who, by owning their own history, would work to liberate themselves and their nation from economic and political injustices.[14] In Brazil the Catholic workers were instrumental in organizing youth movements, peasant unions in the Northeast and literacy programs using Paulo Freire's (1970) method of developing political consciousness (conscientização).

The concurrent revolution in Cuba and the growing number of radical youth organizing for political change produced a volatile situation that was put in check by the armed forces. The military coup of 1964 in Brazil based its intervention on the ideology of 'national security' and denominated the growing political movements 'subversive,' 'communist inspired' and 'anti-Brazilian.' Paulo Freire and other activists, priests, nuns, intellectuals and rebellious youth were arrested and tortured or exiled; an authoritarian regime was installed (Skidmore 1988).

[14] See G. Gutiérrez (1971;1977); L. Boff (1980; 1981a;1981b); for a critique see Castro-Gómez (1996), Sathler & Nascimento (1997)

Since democratic decision-making structures were dismantled during the military regime, people sought out other instances or arenas for public discussions, oppositional theory building and organization. The base communities organized by the progressive wing of the Church became such an arena. During the latter part of the military regime new social movements emerged, some of them direct offshoots of the base communities and others sporadic developments within the favelas, in which shanty-town residents organized for better living conditions, urbanization, daycare and so on. Although many of the social movements for better living conditions were goal-oriented and dispersed after reaching their objectives, social scientists have pondered the lasting effects this type of organizing could have on the daily lives of people (see Caldeira 1987; Cardoso 1983, 1987; Jacobi 1987). A closely linked space for oppositional organization came from the unions within the region of São Paulo. The emergence of the Worker's Party from union organizations provided an instrumental channel for demanding an end to the military regime. This was the first time in Brazilian history that unions had formed independently from the paternalistic control of the State and had negotiated directly with the industrialists opposing the State (Fausto 1996). Unlike other countries in Latin America with military regimes, Brazil experienced a transitional phase towards democratization (abertura) whereby elections were progressively installed and the military successively gave up its authoritarian State control to elected officials. The democratization process and the writing of the new constitution of 1988 after the military regime provided a means by which various interest groups could voice their concerns, especially those regarding 'minority' issues. In the restructuring of the Brazilian government, a reshuffling process occurred, which is not usually found in well-structured, traditional States, during which new ideas and concerns could be incorporated into the State's political agenda. During this short period (opportunity) the writing of the constitution provided yet another arena for social political debate and resulted in a constitution that heralds human rights.

By using the expanded model of need's interpretation to analyze the recent developments within the Brazilian State, the particularities of the Brazilian context come to light. As stated above, when the social arena for public discussion was closed off by an authoritarian State, people and groups found other 'publics' and spaces where they could

express their concerns and develop oppositional strategies. These arenas included the Base Communities and neighborhood organizations, the newly organized unions, party organizations during the abertura process, and the constitutional assembly. Rather than 'needs talk,' the idiom of 'human rights' was employed by opposition groups in Brazil and internationally during the military government to demand an end to the abusive practices of the regime. Later, with the redemocratization process, the concept of human rights was utilized by popular interest groups in the writing of the new Constitution. Only recently, with the democratization process, the idiom of cidadania (citizenship, which in Brazil revolves around the concepts of civil rights and responsibilities) has become a major discursive paradigm which includes but goes beyond the issue of class. Although closely related to human rights it is less universal and more contextual. Under the banner of cidadania, women's and ethnic groups have voiced their claims to equal representation, civil rights, special protections, and so on within the Brazilian nation. Within the current context of economic stabilization, and a strengthening democracy it appears that this new paradigm has provided a means to increase public awareness on ethnic, gender and class issues and to implement anti-discriminatory policies.[15]

Concurrently the development of the so-called terceiro setor (third sector) previously hindered by the patrimonial workings of the State and more specifically by lack of tax incentives, has in the last few years produced private initiatives for industry to invest in social programs (see Instituto Ethos; Gife). This has brought on a surge of volunteer projects and a growing number of non-governmental agencies that deal with the problems ranging from specialized education to monitoring congress, and investigating cases of corruption (Época October 25, 1999). Although many of the more politically oriented groups are funded through international donations, this new phenomenon has instigated an alternative form of civil participation that is seen as a way of complementing the activities of the State. This rapidly growing area has prompted discussions about the role of non-governmental agencies in relation to the State (Viveros 1997).

[15] See Fraser's (1989) comments on the similarity between 'needs talk' and social rights which parallels to some degree 'human rights' talk and the concept of citizenship in Brazil. See also Vidal (2000) and Oliveira, J.M. (2000) for a discussion on the understanding of *cidadania* in Brazil.

Non-governmental agencies remain, however, local or issue oriented and have not become means for large-scale movements. Currently in Brazil, there are two major political vehicles for those who propose to criticize and alter the patrimonial State: The Landless movement which puts into question the private property interests of the oligarchy by pressing for agrarian reform within the interior; and the Worker's Party which emerged from the context-specific struggle for worker's rights in the metropolitan region of São Paulo and expanded to become a national movement. For women in politics, the Worker's Party has been the movement most open to implementing policies based on women's needs and has given space for women candidates for public office.

Despite the return to formal democratic processes, the writing of a progressive Constitution and the organization of popular based movements for agrarian reform and civil rights, experts are divided on whether 'real' changes have occurred in Brazil in regards to the structures of the State.

A number of well-known Brazilian political and social experts have marked a new phase in the evolution of the Brazilian State, citing that since 1984 with the Diretas Já campaign (Direct Elections Campaign), followed by the impeachment process against Collor, the imprisonment of several congressmen and a judge for corruption and misuse of funds, and the scandal and subsequent judgement of congressmen (particularly political boss Antônio Carlos Magalhães, known as ACM) involved in tampering with the congressional voting machine, the Brazilian citizenry has been less willing to tolerate corruption and the old model of clientelismo.

> We are living a moment of discoronelization of Brazilian politics, that is also a discolonization. These things of political bosses (....)do not combine nor are they accepted by the new citizenship (Carlos Guilherme Mota cited in Bressan 2001a).

However, there is reluctance by others to voice optimism in a country where traditionally regional and private interests have overridden national concerns (Bressan 2001b). Likewise, skeptics argue that the structure of the party system in Brazil gives opportunities for corruption. With weak roots, low levels of identification among politicians who often skip from one party to another, erratic voter support, and the tendency for political

and social groups to give support to individual politicians rather than party organizations, the party system allows politicians great autonomy when elected. Thus, the opportunity for graft and clientelism among individual politicians is high (Mainwaring 1999).

Other social scientists, rather than focusing on internal developments, have stressed the importance of imperialism and colonialism in shaping the economic and social development of Brazil. They have argued that the identification of differing metamorphoses of the patron-client system in other Latin American countries as well as in Africa, indicates that the Brazilian political structure, although unique, shares similarities with other colonial nations. Thus, these scientists stress the international influences on Brazilian State formation and stress the need for a model that goes beyond internal political analysis. They hold that the fact that the colonial economy was directed towards a foreign rather than internal market favored the development of a patron-client form of domination (Chiavenato 1980; Prado Jr. 1980; Safiotti1976). Colonial powers were much more interested in reaping the harvest of raw materials rather than forming an integral nation of citizens. It was much more convenient for the Portuguese Crown to deal with and control a few members of the oligarchy than concern itself with an entire population. And on a broader basis, it was much easier for England to use Portugal as a mediator than to work directly with the colony. Political independence achieved in 1882 did not coincide with economic independence or with internal political freedoms; rather the economic dependence of Brazil was shifted to England, instead of Portugal and would later continue to shift according to the international economic system (Safiotti 1976). The oligarchy while maintaining control of the Brazilian colony and later nation-State, was itself controlled by foreign interests.

Dependency theorists (Cardoso, F.H. & Falleto 1974; Fernandes F. 1973) have argued that the persistence of poverty in the 'third world' countries is a result of influences and controls by 'first world' countries. They have cited that the worldwide division of labor between manufacturing nations and raw material exporters has resulted in privileged standards of living in the former and poverty in the latter, thus producing a relationship of 'center' and 'periphery.' Multinational corporations have been identified as factors in third world poverty since they tend to decapitalize economies by providing only minimum wages and producing goods for privileged classes. International debts, which have plagued Brazil

since its inception, and austerity programs designed by foreign economists (the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) have also been cited as reasons for Brazilian inequalities.[16] But dependency theorists have also noted that the problem is not only a matter of global economics but also local politics. F.H Cardoso and Falleto (1974) have argued that there are levels and types of dependency and within this context, the so-called dependent countries have alternatives available based also on internal politics rather than solely on economic contingencies.

The current globalization of the world market and the advances in the area of computer technology have produced a new paradigm of international relationships which at times appears favorable to the development of democratic and egalitarian processes and at other times appears to thwart such initiatives. Most recent political and academic discourses attempt to grapple with this new phenomenon (see Albrow & King 1990; Castro-Gómez & Mendieta 1998; Dussel 2000). The economic agreements between countries in the form of Mercosul between countries of the Southern Hemisphere and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) have made the economic interdependence between countries even more explicit.

Senator Roberto Freire in an interview by the São Paulo newspaper*, Estado de São Paulo*, expresses how international integration is having a positive effect in the restructuring of Brazilian internal politics.

> (..) there has never been such total freedom as now, because the process of integration – not to use the term globalization – did not only internationalize financial flow. It also internationalized the struggle of women, of human rights and respect for democracy. Sure there can always be retrogression, but in the actual context, this would be unsustainable (...) the changes in the forces of production and personal relations that are reflected in the institution have not been fully comprehended by our oligarchies. (...) We are dealing with the farewell of an era, of the liquidation of an age and of an archaic political concept, the sentiment of pudency, of neopopulism of the authoritarian profile.... (Senator Roberto Freire cited in Bressan 2001a).

[16] See Burbach & Flynn (1980) for a report on the effects of multinational agricultural industries in the Americas and Kucinski (1984) for a critique of the multinationals in Brazil. See Galeano (1971) for a critique of the actions of the United States and Europe on the Latin American poor.

Which conclusions can be drawn when we look at the class differences and the different moments in the construction of a Brazilian State? In following the ideologies that arose in regards to the Brazilian State it appears that there has been little agreement on exactly what form the State should take, much less what role it should play in the affairs of the population. The metamorphoses include: Portuguese colony to monarchy to elite controlled republic to populist dictatorship and later populist democracy to military dictatorship and then to formal democracy. At differing historic periods conflicts have arisen from opposing ideological interpretations of what model the State should reflect: colonial dependency versus national independence; the social contract versus monarchy; socialist ideology versus the national security doctrine; imperialism versus nationalism; neo-liberal democratic capitalism versus a socialist democratic design.

But as stated above, the maintenance of power by an elite group and Brazil's unequal bargaining position in international affairs continue to present challenges for social movements. Current formal democratic structures notwithstanding, traditional regional (private) concerns continue to override national issues. With the State overtly controlled by regional interests, pillared in corruption, and dependent on foreign loans, the population has had to learn to make do *despite* the State. Thus the middle-class opts to pay private institutions rather than depend on public services, while lower-class people must depend on their own creativity and resourcefulness not excluding the option of robbery and other illegal endeavors.

We can, therefore, conclude that in Brazil there is a unique blend of egalitarian and liberal ideas of universal rights mixed with a hierarchical system of values in which personal mediations and the famous "do you know with whom you are speaking" carries more political weight than established laws (DaMatta 1988). Our discussion on class issues has brought out the interrelationship between international and national discourses and the very structure and organization of the State. The Brazilian State, while going through a series of metamorphosis, has traditionally held up the interests of elite groups and has been marked by an unequal position within the global economic market.

Finally, it is also necessary to see how these conclusions are related to the framework and the model of analysis I have been employing. Thus I have touched on the various

concepts within Fraser's model: the private and public; the social; special interests; oppositional movements; the State; and experts. In my discussion, I necessarily had to deal with the structuring of the Brazilian State and international contacts that have historically permeated the construction of the Brazilian context. This discussion has included both formal processes relating to the official governmental apparatus and cultural norms and interrelationships. When possible, I have noted how the drawing of the line between private and public has resulted in protecting the interests of some to the detriment of others. I have approached these areas as constructed discursive categories and have utilized the material produced by 'experts' to demonstrate the differing interpretations given to each. Within this discussion I have included some categories that were not explicitly treated within Fraser's model: the participation of international discourses and the controlling articulations of the elites within the private/public debates.

Another issue, which is a direct outcome of our discussion, is that oppositional groups have attempted to change the structures of the State through a variety of means, be they revolutionary guided armed conflict; resistance movements; consciousness-raising pedagogic practices; union organizing; mass settlement of private property; direct elections; neighborhood organizing; theological argumentation; political party formation and so on. These strategies were based on the particular historic context, the resources the groups had on hand, the options available for political maneuvering and their ideological interpretation of this context. The current idiom of *cidadania* presently guides the discourse of oppositional groups in their attempt to construct a civil society in Brazil, to develop the necessary procedures both formally and culturally that will allow for the full participation of all citizens in national affairs and to strengthen the space for the 'social' so that discussions that are carried out have significant effect on the practices of the State and on cultural norms.

Not only in relation to the State, but also in terms of geographic and racial discourses, other discursive structures emerged as significant players within the construction of the Brazilian context. Although I have already mentioned the repressive State forces and the Church, I feel that they warrant particular attention within a model of need interpretation. Fraser (1989) does not specifically deal with repressive forces or the Church and in my theoretical discussion of her model, but I have argued that repressive forces make up a

component of the State apparatus while the Church could be identified as a privatizing institution. I have argued in Chapter 2 that these interests are often overlooked factors within the analysis of social movements in 'western' democracies. In the Brazilian case and in many post-colonial states, the presence of repressive forces and the influence of organized religion were and continue to be important considerations for social movements (see Rai & Leivesley 1996) and; therefore, require a specific categorization within a discourse model. In what follows I would like to concentrate on repressive and religious forces as two other discursive structures that deserve our attention.

Repressive State Forces

I have adopted the use of one broad category – repressive State forces – to include a variety of organizations that have historically carried out different functions.[17] However, the privileged status of repressive forces and their utilization of armed physical force remains common to all of their many variations (Fernandes, H.1973). I will now outline some of the major ideological trends that have shaped the way repressive forces have acted in Brazil in order to demonstrate that they constitute a part of the State apparatus that must be considered explicitly within the analysis of the Brazilian political system.

The organization of permanent forces in Brazil and in the Metropolis began in 1640. These forces, comprised of Portuguese officials, colonial volunteers and recruits were directed towards the maintenance of the internal relations of production and the power of the Crown as well as its territorial protection and expansion (Fernandes, H. 1973). During the colonial period, plantation owners often took matters into their own hands and employed a *capitão do mato* to capture fugitive slaves or hired private militia to maintain control of property and repress any peasant revolts. Due to the local administration of the police, plantation owners were often able to control the elections of the police chief and local judges or buy them off (Fernandes, H. 1973). Thus, coercive methods by means of private forces or through political control of State forces were also used to protect private interests.

[17] See Fernandes, H.R.(1973) for a discussion on this term which she defines as "the specific and *privileged* components in the use of armed physical force...in this case not only the Armed forces (Army, Marines, Airforce) but also the Civil Police, Public force, National Guard, Civil Guard, etc." (p. 22).

In terms of territorial expansion and protection of the Brazilian territory the armed forces were employed against such naval powers as Holland and France, against Paraguay in the war of the Triple Alliance, against internal separatist tendencies and revolts (northern and southern territories) against *quilombos*, and against the Amerindian populations. In most of these cases the soldiers were made up largely of Amerindians, or African slaves – even expansionist groups which sought to capture Amerindians such as the *Bandeirantes* were made up largely of Amerindians from other tribes (Fausto 1996). During the war of the Triple Alliance, the Portuguese Crown bought African slaves to fight in the war against Paraguay. Although this war resulted in a considerable decrease in the African population in Brazil, the military returned politicized, took a stance in favor of abolition and was influential in the downfall of the monarch (Chiavenato 1980). Therefore, the division between oppressed and oppressor within the armed forces has always been complex especially when considering the participation (or manipulation) of ethnic groups to achieve military goals or to repress other ethnic groups. Also the military has often suffered internal divisions, in which geographically defined separatist armies have fought against nationalist armies. Finally, the military has not always allied itself with the government, but has acted as an independent force in opposition to the regime.

During the Republic, repressive forces were professionalized (uniforms were instituted and training courses offered) and the growing urbanization required that repressive forces take on a civic function to protect class interests, repress unions and so on. The civil police, rather than acting as an army disconnected from the daily life of the people, took on a more intimate and continuous relationship with the population. Whereas the military ideology saw the need to separate the forces from the population and worked to impose its will, the civil ideology was preventive and cooperative. Thus, the military carried out a hybrid function: a military or a civic role depending on the circumstances (Fernandes, H. 1973).

The positivist philosophy of Comte as interpreted by Benjamin Constant would further define the civic mission of the military. According to Constant the positivist belief in social order and progress towards modernization could be achieved under the paternalistic guidance of the military.[18] The military had the duty to intervene politically should the

[18] See Corrêa A.J. (1997) for a more detailed analysis of positivism within the Brazilian military.

civilian politicians fail. Gilberto Freyre also adopted this outlook on the military in *Naçāo and Exército* (1949 cited in Mota 1980, p. 70) affirming that the function of the army was to pacifically coordinate contrary movements within the nation; support those movements which are more in accord with traditional aspirations and general necessities; act against demagogic excesses and the infiltration of foreigners; and cooperate with civil activities in the interests of national security. In fact, the military had to a large degree already been acting on this level. The Independence of Brazil from Portugal (1822), the fall of the Brazilian monarchy and the establishment of the Old Republic (1889), the control of popular revolts (1990-1930), and the Vargas dictatorship (1930) and final overthrow were all carried out by or under the influence of the military without prolonged or severe armed conflict. While local forces acted to protect private interests, the purpose of the armed forces evolved from that which would protect the integrity of the Brazilian territory to one in which the primary concern was of internal order and progress. The ideology of geopolitics would take these objectives a step further.

The ideology of geopolitics has been defined as "the theory of the State as a geographical organism" (Comblin 1984). It was founded by the Swede Rudolf Kjellén, a follower of the Pan-German movement which later became connected with national socialism. According to Kjellén the State is comparable to a person with its own set of characteristics, needs and struggles (Kjellén 1916 cited in Comblin 1984). The concept of the State as an organism with its own life, which can grow as well as die, produced a project in which the principal objective was to promote the State as a being in itself. Territory and population become mere means for the State to achieve sovereignty and power (Comblin 1984).

This description fit well with the cold war ideology prevalent at that time in which the major threat to a nation was perceived as coming from communist infiltrators or subversives. Fear that the Cuban revolution would cause subsequent revolutions throughout Latin America, the National War College in the United States assisted in the development of the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (Superior School of War) in Brazil which offered one year courses based on the doctrine of the internal war (*guerra interna*) for military officers and civilians. Based on these doctrines union workers, leftist intellectuals, rural workers, religious

activists, and student leaders were identified as potential threats to internal security (Skidmore 1988).

The military coup of 1964 was the first of several military coups in South America and would be one of the last to relinquish power. The military defined its mission to first frustrate the communist takeover of Brazil and second to reestablish order so that legal reforms could be executed (see Manifesto of March 30, 1964 by Castelo Branco in Filho 1975, p. 3.). This would be in accord with the diagnosis of Oliveira Vianna (1920 in Corrêa 1997, pp. 193-194) that Brazil would need a period of authoritarianism in order to build a liberal society and would point to the transitional nature of the military regime. Consequently, immediately after the coup the military began its 'clean-up' of 'subversives'. In fact, repressive forces in the form of paramilitary groups had already started to intimidate student leaders and execute peasant leaders before the coup. The hard line side of the military with a list of about five thousand 'enemies of the State' advanced its operations of forced and illegal imprisonments, tortures, executions and extraditions (Skidmore 1988).

Over the next 20 years, the military installed a number of restrictive measures on the population, particularly student, labor and peasant movements, and implemented austerity measures. The government received financial support from the United States in an era when the U.S. was waging its own war against communism in Vietnam. The Rockefeller report (1969), which focused primarily on the need to repress communist tendencies in Brazil rather than on the lack of civil liberties, was very influential in the policies the United States government would take towards the Brazilian military government (Skidmore 1988). There are a number of social scientists who have interpreted the military takeover in Brazil as the direct intervention by the U.S. government influenced by industrial interests (see in Skidmore 1988).

The Brazilian military initiative in 1964 sparked a new series of military governments in South America: Chile, Argentina, Uruguay soon followed. An interesting aspect in the Brazilian military regime is the fact that the Brazilian military refused to accept a strong-man regime (such as Pinochet in Chile) but respected the principle of passing the government from one general to another. Although the transitional nature of the regime appeared at times to be more permanent than Castelo Branco had originally stated and although the excesses of

the regimes are still being investigated, the repressive operations of the military were not as blatant or as systematic as those carried out in Argentina and Chile. Another aspect particular to Brazil was the *abertura* process by which democracy was installed in successive stages. This resulted in a 'peaceful' phase from military dictatorship to civilian democracy (Fausto 1996).

Thus in the latter part of the 20th century, one can trace the international influences on the military, which while incorporated into military ideology bore the mark of the Brazilian context. Foreign-born cold war ideology and geopolitcs, military training and financial support were necessary factors in the evolution of the Brazilian military State. Although one could interpret the turn to military governments as a regional, Latin American phenomenon, and there is evidence that at times the military governments coordinated activities, there were basic differences between how these governments saw their role within the particular nation State and how they eventually relinquished their power to more democratic processes.

At present the military has taken a backstage position in Brazilian politics. After the successful democratic elections of three presidents and the ability of the current government to control inflation and offer at least the promise of economic stability, the possibility of a military challenge to democratic government appears to be remote. After the transference of power from the military regime to the democratic government, the military continues to carry out specific functions within civil society as fire fighters; highway police; forest police and criminal investigators.

However, police violence and torture carried out within the military academy and against civilians has consistently been in the news and political magazines since the democratic elections (Nogueira 1997; Secco 1999). From 1994-1995 there was a 400% increase in the incidence of serious crimes committed by the police, although the processes against police violence within the military justice system rarely come to court (Menconi 1997; Human Rights Watch 1999). Talk on what to do about the problem of police violence has resulted in contradictory in-order-to chains although proposals such as increasing salaries, organizing community-based police districts, and providing better training, including classes on human rights and citizenship have been attempted in several cities (Sardenberg & Goncalves 1997).

The issue of police repression, high levels of criminality and impunity are intricately intertwined in the class structure of the Brazilian society. Saffioti (1987) theorizes that although equality before the law may exist on the formal level, the dominant classes formulate the norms and the procedures by which laws are made. Therefore, the civil code was designed to guarantee property rights and class privilege while the penal code was designed to penalize those that infringed on the property rights of the dominant class and to leave unpunished those who exploit public patrimony. The common sense expression in Brazil that 'the civil code is the code of the rich and the penal code is the code of the poor' elucidates how repressive forces are designed to maintain class privileges.

The problem of police violence is not limited to the urban areas. The massacre of 19 *Sem Terra* workers in Eldorado de Carajás, Pará on April 17, 1996 reached national discussion when, on the one-year anniversary of the massacre, *Movimento sem-terra* organized the largest march against the Cardoso government in which 50-100 thousand people were reported to have participated and demanded punishment for 150 military police on trial for the massacre, the largest number of accused brought together for one trail in the history of Brazilian law.[19]

The civil or state police (delegacias) are mainly responsible for receiving testimonies and collecting sufficient proof for the presentation of a report to the judge. From the time of its inception in Brazil the police have been provided with inadequate instruction or training, have been offered low salaries and have been expected to use force to ensure *social order and peace.* The use of physical violence and illegal detentions has been tolerated as being part of the resources police could use in exercising their role (Vinagre Silva 1992; Secco 1999). According to a human rights group in Belo Horizonte, 30% of the civil police have been accused of committing crimes (Secco 1999). Despite video taped documentation of grave violations of human rights committed by civil police, the judicial system has consistently absolved the offenders of crimes (Human Rights Watch 1999). Thus, while military abuses sanctioned by the State were identified by resistance groups during the military regime as violating the human rights of the citizenry, currently human rights groups have focused

[19] See several articles in the *Folha de São Paulo*, August 15 1999, pp. 4-12.

attention on local police forces (military or civil) which have carried out abuses on specific populations.

Police brutality has not resulted in ebbing criminal activity. On the contrary, the efficiency of the police to control and solve crimes is extremely low (Lombardi 2001a; 2001b). In São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and in Minas Gerais, an average of 2.5% of all crimes are solved compared to 22% in the United States, 35% in England, 45% in Canada and 58% in Japan. However, if the situation improved the justice system and the penitentiary system would topple (Secco 1999). Since 1964 there have been cuts in resources offered the judiciary system, which has resulted in the backlogging of cases. Consequently those lacking in resources who are awaiting a trial or a public defender have had do so within the penitentiary system, resulting in overcrowded prisons and jails (Vinagre Silva 1992). Already alarmingly slow, the justice system would have to increase up to 10 times the number of judges and the already overcrowded penitentiary system would have to make major investments in the building of new prisons (Secco 1999).

Overcrowded and inhuman conditions in the prisons has led to a series of rebellions, escapes and murders within the Brazilian prisons promoting talk on the building of more prisons and the need for further repressive means within the prisons (Human Rights Watch 1999). Amnesty International (2001) cites blatant disregard for human rights within the police stations, prisons and centers for youth including tortures and murders (Avancini 2001). The United Nations has also demanded that Brazil find an 'urgent' solution to the situation of prisons reporting the lack of basic hygiene or medical attention, tortures and overcrowded conditions (Chade 2001). Thus, while international efforts previously exerted influence by providing ideological and financial support for the Brazilian authoritarian government, currently the international trend is to denounce human rights abuses carried out by military police or incarcerative institutions.

Given the general scenario of police inefficiency and brutality and generalized impunity, security for the upper- and middle-classes has become a private matter. Fear of violence and lack of confidence in police protection are evident within the cities where electric fences installed on the tops of high concrete walls surround houses guarded by large

dogs in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. Even apartment buildings maintain high walls and gates with electronic cameras installed at all entrances and within the elevators.

Although repressive in nature, and generally ineffective against controlling crime, the civil police have a very close relationship to the urban working poor (Vinagre Silva 1992). Open during hours that other social service agencies close, low-income people have used the police stations as information centers. Because poor people generally lack information regarding their rights or an understanding of the laws and judicial system, the local police stations have serviced as mediators between this population and the judicial system. Whether or not adequate mediation occurs often depends on the willingness of the particular officer to attend to a case (Vinagre Silva 1992).

Other government agencies such as FEBEM – *Fundação para o Bem Estar do Menor* (Foundation for the Well-being of the Minor) initially created to reform wayward children have become 'houses of terror' according to the testimony of children who have passed through the doors of this institution. The journalist Carlos Alberto Luppi (in Morais 1981) made a list of 23 tortures and abuses utilized against children as common daily practices within the FEBEM. Rebellions and organized escapes in 1999 instigated another series of reports about inhuman conditions within the federal agencies (see Klintowitz 1999; Human Rights Watch 1999).

Although I have concentrated on the repressive forces connected to the State apparatus, I do not intend to deny the existence of other forms of coercive practices carried out by other institutions such as the church or private industry and agriculture. Obviously the maintenance of slavery did not depend solely on the controlling forces of State police but was to a large degree possible due to the official approval of the Church and the methods used by 'private' landowners. Exploitation of industrial workers by industry provides another example of institutionalized violence carried out without explicit recall to police forces. Thus, although quite different in character, repressive forces have and continue to affect the political scenario of Brazil.

Within the discussion concerning police brutality and the concurrent inefficiency to ebb violence, a series of interpretations have developed. The police themselves have articulated the need for training, infrastructure and better salaries. Others have noted how

class race and gender bias, not to mention homophobia, appear to permeate the police forces and guides their actions in response to particular groups. Impunity awarded by the judiciary has taken the discussion a step further to question the political inclinations of judges or the ability of powerful groups to buy and control the courts. Local politics and the traditional power awarded to political bosses have been identified as the principle cause for police brutality and criminal impunity in particular regions of Brazil. Yet other theorists consider police violence to be a natural outcome of a patriarchal State. South American feminists have stressed the patriarchal foundations of military regimes and identified their roots in authoritarian social relationships. They have argued that if children are socialized under rigid sex role assignments and unequal social relationships in regards to race and class, they will learn to later reproduce these structures in schools, factories, political parties, government institutions and so on. In order to eradicate violence it is necessary to combat inequalities on all levels (Kirkwood 1987).

The various forms that repressive forces have taken within Brazil have obviously shifted over time, as have their connections with the State, the private sector and international bodies. The military, for instance, at one time incorporated the State, dominated the social, but, while imposing censorship on some 'private' initiatives, did not attempt to fully control private life as have other totalitarian States. Currently however, the military has been reduced to an appendage of the State, although it retains a degree of independence, which has caused controversy. In regards to the police, it appears that the private/public line between the police in their relationship with the lower-classes has never been firmly established, thus police have raided neighborhoods, entered houses and tortured and killed people without substantial reprimand. Within the prison structures, this line becomes all the more blurred.

I have used these examples to argue that the role of the military and other repressive forces must be taken into account when considering the context of the country and the emergence of social movements and that such an analysis is indispensable in understanding the interpretations and strategies available for social change.

The Catholic Church and other Religious Organizations

From the colonial period, the Catholic Church could never be described as a united monolithic whole. The relationship of the Catholic Church to the various colonies differed from country to country and, within the Brazilian context, the Church has often held contradictory theological/political positions. The political power enjoyed by the Church in determining private from public matters has diminished considerably since the colonial period; however, it still retains significant symbolic power as a primary institution within the Brazilian nation. I will argue that the Church and religious organizations cannot be overlooked in an analysis of the Brazilian political system. In what follows, I will trace the differing articulations of and about the Church and religious organizations within the Brazilian historical context.

The Roman Church conceded power to the Portuguese Crown in exchange for the guarantee that the Crown would organize and secure the rights of the Church in all of the discovered territories (Fausto 1996). This relationship of *Padroado* was maintained during the colonial period (1500-1822) and the independent monarchy (1822-1889). Thus, the Church was able to secure its political power of the new territories as the Portuguese was colonizing them.

The question of race became one of the major discursive issues for the Church during the early period of colonization and would continue to be a topic of discussion well into the 20th century. The debate over the particular status that should be ascribed to the Amerindians became polarized as the Jesuits and to a lesser degree the Dominican orders supported and defended the rights of the Amerindians, against most of the white population, clergy and religious orders who, for various reasons, regarded the Amerindians as inferior, supported their enslavement and the violent methods of controlling them (Comblin 1984).

The protective justifications awarded Amerindians by the work of the Jesuits were not transferred on to the situation of African slaves. The Church gained a percentage in the slave trade and provided the major ideological justification for slavery by arguing that through baptism the Church could bring the slaves to the Christian faith, thereby saving their souls. The voices of those against slavery would be silenced by the larger interests of the Church

and individual priests in collusion with the plantation owners and the Crown (Chiavenato 1980).

In an attempt to control the slaves, the Church organized religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods, taking care to separate the slaves from others of the same origin as well as creating rivalries by dividing them according to skin color. The organizations also had the role of segregating blacks from the white religious services (Baptista 1986; Gonçalves 1986). The Inquisition never became a permanent installation in Brazil; however, it directed its activities in the persecution of Jews and New Christians (Jews sent to Brazil and forced to convert to Christianity), and the religious practices of the Africans and Amerindians (Fausto1996). Thus, almost immediately the Catholic Church was called upon to give discursive justification for the social and economic organization of a slave-economy and produce mechanisms to maintain order within this system.

However, as the Brazilian colony grew demographically, the Church had to deal with maintaining its control over a widely heterogeneous population of Amerindians, African descendents and Portuguese colonists. During the colonial period, the activities of the priests were often difficult to control and, as some of the religious orders gained properties and developed agricultural enterprises, they gained autonomy from the Crown. They also suffered modifications that shocked foreigners. Ecclesiastical Catholicism, which defined the official dogmas of the Church, would not be able to control the actual religious practices or the popular Catholicism of the colonists. The particular conditions of the colony and the type of Catholicism inherited from the Portuguese are used as factors to explain the lack of rituality in the mass and the general lack of religious conviction among the population (Holanda 1995). A superficial religiosity, an intimate almost 'democratic' religious service lacking in solemnity, full of pomp and color but almost transient in nature, are reasons given for why the Church was unable to produce a powerful social and moral order (Holanda 1995; Nunes 1997).[20] What could also be interpreted as the flexibility of Brazilian Catholicism allowed for the integration or synthesis of Catholicism with other African and Amerindian religions

[20] Nunes (1997) quotes a popular saying which exemplifies the general lack of dogma within Brazilian colonial Catholicism: *Muito Deus e pouco padre; muito céu e pouca igreja; muita reza e pouca missa.* (A lot of God and little priest; a lot of heaven and little church; a lot of prayer and little Mass.)

resulting in syncretic religious practices of which Brazil is particularly famous (Ferretti 1995).

There has been considerable discussion on the meaning and benefits of Brazilian religious syncretism. Nina Rodrigues (1935, in Ferretti 1995) for example considered black people to be incapable of the elevated level of abstraction needed for monotheism and questions the validity of their conversion to Catholicism. By taking an evolutionary perspective, he documented the differences between black, *mestiço* and white religious practices along a scale of inferior to superior race and cultural practices. Later social scientists would shed the explicit racist views of Rodrigues by changing the concepts of inferior-superior to those of conflict-accommodation-assimilation. Bastide (1960), on the other hand, stressed the ability of the Africans to incorporate some of the aspects of Christianity while still preserving their African beliefs. Rather than focusing on the syncretic strategies of the African and Amerindian populations, Bastide turns the tables by focusing on the how the syncretic practices of the Catholic Church were used to attract followers. He asserts that the Afro-Brazilian religions were anti-syncretic forms of resistance to European domination.

In the 1970s and 1980s the idea of preservation was taken a step further by those interested in studying the pure forms of African religions or in recovering the lost forms of 'authentic' African religiosity. Most recent studies have taken on specific examples of syncretism and shown how throughout Brazil whether in the central region of Minas Gerais, in the Amazonas or in the Northeast, different forms of syncretism have occurred and for different reasons. The idea of resistance has been discarded by demonstrating syncretic aspects in Candomblé and Amerindian religions.[21] If we have difficulty defining the Catholic church as a single unified whole, it is hardly possible to talk of syncreticism (which has been defined as fusion, encounter, mixture, juxtaposition, parallelism convergence, adaptation, assimilation) of Catholicism with the various African and Amerindian religions as being a single phenomenon. However, we are reminded by Sathler & Nascimento (1997) that

[21] See Ferretti (1995) for a more detailed discussion on the various interpretations of syncretism and an evaluation of the current research.

syncretism occurred within a hierarchical context in which the Catholic Church maintained its dominance and where people made religious choices based on this context.

While the Church was instrumental in controlling race relations, it necessarily had to involve itself with the control of women's sexual activity. The Church attempted often in vain to diffuse the Catholic faith to the inhabitants of the New World and install the structure of the monogamous marriage in order to control sexuality and insure Christian morals (Del Priore 1989). Sermons, prayers, books and counseling methods were developed to instill within the female population the need for modesty in clothing, obedience and submission to their husbands, strict control over sexual habits even within marriage, and dedication to the Christian education of their children. Men were also called upon to counsel and when necessary punish their wives and to restrict their sexual activity to that which the Church approved. Obviously sexuality, especially that of women, was considered a topic for public discussion rather than a private, individual matter (Del Priore 1989). Despite the restrictive policies of the Church, women would often call upon the ecclesiastical tribunes and officials to come to their aid when seeking separation from violent husbands or when demanding the return of run-away fiancées who had deflowered them (Del Priore 1989).

The efforts that the officials of the Church took to control sexual behavior belies the variety of sexual activity within the colony. Sermons requiring women to cover their breasts in public, to control their sexuality within the confines of marriage, and to remain faithful implies that women exposed their breasts, manifested themselves sexually outside of the marriage vows and were not always faithful to their husbands (Del Priore 1989). Prostitution on the other hand, was considered by the Church to be a lesser crime than adultery and a practical way of ensuring work for poor women, preserving marriage, and offering a counter-image for the pure housewife. The Church itself called for the immigration of prostitutes from Europe to satisfy the needs of the male colonizers and decrease the cases of miscegenation (Del Priore 1989). Thus the control of sexuality and race relations were closely interrelated.

Due to the precarious economic conditions that the larger part of the population suffered and the restrictive measures of the Church regarding marriage between people of different races or of widows, which limited marriage opportunities and transformed it into an

elite form of family organization, numerous consensual forms of cohabitation evolved within the popular classes of the Brazilian colony.[22] Such relationships were not limited to lay people, for a common complaint against the clergy were the relationships priests had with women. The nudity of Amerindians, the supposed sensuality of black slaves and the close contact with pious white women are documented as presenting serious temptations for priests. Seduction by priests of women at confession, sexual abuse of slaves and Amerindians and even long term sexual relationships appeared to have been quite common (Del Priore 1989).

In an attempt to correct some of the divergences within Brazilian Catholicism due to its contact with non-Christian religions, and in regards to the actual practices of priests and members, a large number of European missionaries were sent to Brazil at the end of the 1800s to inject the wayward colonial Church with unadulterated forms of Catholicism. Immediate cultural problems arose but according to R.C. Fernandes (1988) it was the cult of St. Mary that was able to unite the foreign missionaries with the national priests and the people. Among all the numerous saints that the Catholic Church offers its followers, the images of Mother Mary are most preferred and have multiplied beyond the Saints.[23] Within the syncretic context of Brazil, Mary is associated with Afro-Brazilian counterparts: Oxum, Iemanjá, Oxossi, Preto Velho, Zé Pilintra, Pomba-Gira and so on (Fernandes R.C. 1988; Iwashita 1987). Symbolically, the feminine figure carries considerable weight within Brazilian religiosity and has been the focus of many interpretations. What seems to override most interpretations is that of a suffering mother who is able to make sacrifices with honor. *Nossa Senhora* (Our Lady) is able to feel human pain and has the capacity to resist it (Reily 1984). With such a large population living in poverty, it is obvious how identification with this figure would be immediate and intense. In other situations, Mary has been portrayed as having an inner strength and courage which enables her to enjoy life despite hardships as in the popular song of the 1980s, *Maria, Maria* by Milton Nascimento.

Aragão (1980) negatively interprets the symbolism of the Virgin Mary by suggesting that this image has produced a dualistic understanding of women with hazardous results. He

[22] See Del Priore (1989) for a description of the various types of 'concubinatos.'
[23] See R.C. Fernandes (1988) for a discussion on the multiplicity of Mary images.

theorizes that the murder of women by their husbands in Mediterranean societies is due to the symbolic representation of women as the virgin mother. When a wife demonstrates a certain autonomy or infidelity she loses the aurora of the pure mother and becomes stigmatized by impurity. According to Aragão (1980), the sacrifice of women occurs to alleviate the impurities that threaten the social system.

Thus, the Church maintained its control through flexible religious practices, selective syncreticm, symbolism and attempts to control the domestic organization of the family in line with the particular racial characteristics of the population. Despite attempts to instill Brazilian Catholicism with European dogma, the Church in Brazil developed according to the contextual contingencies of the colony with a largely poor and multi-ethnic population controlled by a small elite. Given these factors, people developed religious practices in accord with their particular positions. The development of various types of Catholicism – official, popular, militant, etc – expresses the divergent ways in which religious beliefs respond to particular needs.[24]

In relation to the State, the Church has been able to maintain a fairly amicable relationship despite challenges. The Constitution of 1824 named the Catholic Church as the official religion although it allowed the restrictive practice of other religions (Fausto 1996). With the first Republic in 1889, the separation of Church and State was institutionalized and freedom of religion was allowed partly on behalf of the new European immigrants, particularly Germans who were Lutheran rather than Catholic and partly due to the influence of the positivists within the military and among some of the politicians. The positivism which evolved in Brazil had a spiritual almost religious side and took an anticlerical stance against the Church (Azevedo, T. 1980). However this threat to the dominance of Catholicism was short lived since the merging of Catholicism and the State would gain new impetus on a symbolic level with the construction in 1931 of a giant statue of Christ looking over Rio de Janeiro, the then federal capitol of Brazil. Due to the work of the Electoral Catholic League, the new constitution of 1934 was voted on "under the protection of God".

If the Catholic Church never regained the official status of State religion, it has enjoyed considerable support and symbolic recognition from the State and vice versa. The

[24] See Brandão (1988) for a discussion on the various dimensions of Catholicism in Brazil.

separation of Church and State in Brazil rather than producing a relatively autonomous Church and a secular State has resulted in the exchange of mutual benefits and favors (Azevedo T. 1980). The Church has always been active in the political affairs of the State and the State has continually called upon the Church to justify its actions (Comblin 1984). According to this interpretation, the Church has acted primarily in justifying and maintaining the status quo, serving to disqualify and privatize those discourses that would question the established power structures.

However, since the disputes in regards to Amerindian slavery, the Church has often been divided and has acted to politicize social liberation movements. During the populist governments, the Church in Brazil collaborated with popular education programs and through the Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT (Pastoral Land Commission) supported the peasant struggles and their occupation of lands. This work was a direct reflection of the type of theology developing at the time. Liberation theology first coined by the Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutiérrez in his book *The Theology of Liberation* in 1969 had a notable influence on the political history of Latin America. Although it actually consisted in a number of differing theologies represented by a wide range of theologians (Leonardo Boff, Rubem Alves, and Hugo Assmann are among the most important Brazilian liberation theologians) its basic premise is that God advances his kingdom through the work with the poor and gives preference to them throughout history. It emerged first as a *praxis* as priests, nuns and church workers were confronted with the conditions of poverty among their followers and became tied to popular movements (Hinkelammert 1997).

In 1968 documents were prepared at the Latin American Episcopal Conference at Medellín, Colombia which openly used liberation language (CELAM 1969). After adoption by the bishops, the theology of liberation was extended throughout most Latin American countries and influenced popular movements, education, and worship (Comblin 1979). As these groups advanced their analysis of poverty, they began to criticize capitalism and imperialism as causes of poverty and proposed changes using Marxist and dependency theories. The primary idiom was that of liberation and revolution which was considered necessary for the construction of a just society on earth, which many interpreted as a socialist one (Comblin 1979; Hinkelammert 1997).

This relationship with Marxism caused an intense negative reaction among more conservative sectors of the Church and among the military. The internationalized fear of communism and the revolutionary politics of a few leftist groups divided the Church. Before the military coup of 1964, masses of women were organized by the Catholic Church to march against the Goulart government and a group of influential bishops prepared a manifesto supporting the *coup*. However, young Catholics involved in popular education such as the *Ação Católica Brasileira* (Brazilian Catholic Action) and the *Ação Popular* (Popular Action) were discontented with the manifesto. The subsequent imprisonment and torture of some of their members caused some church workers to reconsider their support for the military regime (Skidmore 1988).

After the military coup the most progressive wing of the Church began to use the idiom of human rights and resistance (Comblin 1984). They adopted the discourse of life versus death in which life refers to material corporal life rather than a spiritual afterlife while the repressive forces of the military, the exploitive economic practices and environment damaging industries were equated with death (Hinkelammert 1997). Certain key figures began to speak out against the blatant injustices of the military regime: the priests and missionaries in the Amazon; Dom Helder Câmara in the northeast where poverty was particularly oppressive; and Dom Paulo Avaristo Arns in São Paulo who spoke out against the repression and torture of activists, journalists and students (Skidmore 1988). Violence between the more progressive branch of the Church and the military increased as church workers were imprisoned or murdered and church leaders denounced the military.

The *Communidades Eclesiais de Base* – CEBs (Eclesiastical Base Communities) which were groups organized within the shantytowns surrounding the big cities and within the rural poor communities were the practical outgrowths of the Theology of Liberation.[25] By 1973 there were 40 thousand CEBs organized throughout Brazil (Viezzer 1989). The urban base communities around São Paulo were instrumental in the emergence of the Workers' Party and in the campaign for direct elections.

[25] For more detailed analysis of the Eclesiastic Base Communities see Boff, C. (1981b); Ammann, S. (1980); Barreiro, A. (1981); and Barros R. (1967).

However, the conservative arm of the church never ceased to articulate its position. Bishops such as Dom Geraldo de Proença Sigaud of Diamantina spoke out against subversive elements and supported the military regime (Skidmore 1988). Although the Catholic Church had supported the wealthy elite as well as the military dictatorship, and although the Theology of Liberation has since lost its political momentum, one cannot underestimate the influence of this progressive arm of the Church in the movements for social change in Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Theology of Liberation was one of the discourses developed in Latin America that was considered suitable for export. It became required readings for theology students, political activists, as well as business people interested in Latin American investment particularly in the United States and Europe (Hinkelammert 1997). Its impact can perhaps be better appreciated by the number of counter-offensives it provoked. Pope John Paul II who, having lived in Poland under communist rule, was not about to support what was interpreted as a church-lead communist movement in Latin America. Active theologians and church leaders were removed from their posts and silenced and more conservative priests were appointed. The American Enterprise Institute directed by Michael Novak developed a theology department to protest liberation theology while the Institute of Religion and Democracy directed by Peter Berger also refuted liberation theology on the State level. European business organizations founded institutes to counter liberation theology and in the late 1980s Michel Camdessus, head of the International Monetary Fund, developed a theological reflection about the poor, utilizing the discourse of liberation theology in favor of neo-liberal market policies. The Santa Fe document which set the electoral platform for the Reagan presidency considered liberation theology to be a major U.S. national security problem (Hinkelammert 1997).

Since the return to a democratic government in Brazil, the progressive wing of the Church has continued to be active in social movements regarding the situation of the poor, although as a whole, it has turned its attention to religious experience and spirituality in an effort to maintain its dominance before the Neo-Pentecostal movement.[26, 27]

[26] Neo-pentecostal refers to the recent form of religious organizations based on the pentecostal movement, which has adopted an attitude of accommodation within neoliberal capitalism by assuming a theology of

That Brazil is generally considered to be a Catholic country belies the wealth of religious practices and beliefs that can be found among the population. One example that I have already touched on is the Afro-Brazilian religions, particularly Candomblé which already in the 18th century represented a resistance force to slavery. Rebellions and the organization of *quilombos*, the struggle for an African nation within Brazil or a return to Africa, the initiative for abolition, and the defense of civil rights were consequences of the African identity and belief system present in Candomblé. Although these initiative were often fragmented and considered traditional rather than modern, in which the political dimension was not always as clear as for example that of the Catholic Church, Candomblé was and continues to be one of the few representatives of African identity and interests within the Brazilian nation.

Traditional Protestant Churches (Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists) arrived in Brazil with the immigration of Europeans in the 1800 and early 1900s and through missionaries, particularly North-American. Although they have been vocal and made important contributions in the field of education, they remain small (Mendonça 1995). The phenomenal success of the Igreja Universal has inspired the analysis of a number of social scientists.[28] The *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), founded in 1977 by the self-proclaimed Bishop Edir Macedo, has shown an alarming growth rate in terms of membership and financial resources and it has become a major threat to the domination of the Catholic Church (Campos 1997). The Universal church has invested heavily in media and publications and formed a conservative parliamentary faction. It could hardly be considered a mere coincidence that in recent years a priest, Padre Marcelo, has led a successful charismatic campaign within the Catholic Church. The Universal Church in regards to membership, finances and political influence has usurped the traditional Protestant churches, which have a more established history in Brazil.

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prosperity. This is a break from the other-worldliness and pietism of the early pentecostal movement. See Campos (1997).

[27] For an example of how the focus of liberation theologians has modified compare Boff 's *Igreja Carisma e Poder* with his most recent *A águia e a galinha. uma metáfora da condição humana* and *O despertar da águia. O dia-bólico e o sim-bólico na construção da realidade.*

[28] See Campos (1997 for a summary of the research on the Igreja Universal.

In terms of women, this movement has been criticized as advocating rigid sex roles and maintaining the husband as the dominant head of the family. However, other researchers have upheld that the Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches offer women more control over their husbands since the moral teachings of the church advocate fidelity and alcoholic abstinence. In a case study by Burdick (1992), women who were battered by their husbands reported having received more support from the Pentecostal groups than from the CEBs. The Pentecostal women employed the strength and authority invested them by the Holy Spirit and biblical messages to question their husbands' drinking, smoking, adultery or violent behavior. Once the man converted to Pentecostalism, moral pressures exerted on him from the group produced further safeguards on his behavior. The participants in the CEBs, on the other hand, interpreted violence at home more in regards to 'extradomestic' problems of unemployment and class inequality which were outside the immediate control of the man or the woman.

Others have shown how the work within the CEBs has started a chain reaction among women which has brought them to question their relationships of submission to their husbands as well as submission to political structures. Recently, women social scientists have discovered that a gendered analysis of the CEBs has shown that the vast majority of them were made up of women and organized primarily by nuns. This seemingly obvious factor was absent from the initial descriptions of the CEBs where women were hidden within the neutral vocabulary of 'the poor,' 'the oppressed' the 'masses' (Nunes 1997). The organizations offered women the opportunity to go beyond their work within the family and participate within their community and become involved in political activities. Although certain issues were taboo, the CEBs offered a space for women to come together and talk among themselves about topics important to them. Later some groups tired of the restrictions put on them by the Church formed autonomous groups where they could discuss topics such as sexuality and abortion more freely. Thus, the Catholic Church has held an ambiguous role in regards to women. While attempting to restrict the women's role to that of wife and mother, it has also provided opportunities for her to go beyond such roles (Viezzer 1989).

Although currently liberation theology has gone out of fashion and the Catholic Church has become more interested in gaining membership from its primarily Pentecostal rivals by articulating a 'spiritual' message, the progressive arm of the Church continues to

develop support for particular causes such as the landless or children. The Church has continued to hold firm on its position regarding sexuality and has been identified by women's groups as a conservative retrogressive force particularly in regards to the issues of AIDS and abortion. Thus in political terms, the Church maintains both anachronistic beliefs concerning sexuality while supporting socialist inspired movements.

In summary, the Catholic Church has installed itself as a major player within the Brazilian political system such that no analysis of Brazilian social movements during any period in history would be complete without an analysis of the position of the Catholic Church. It has become much more than a simple interest group, but rather a fundamental pillar installed with colonization. Having said this, I have also demonstrated that the Church has never presented itself as a unified whole. Rather, it has often been a divided institution in which differing factions fight for their particular interests sometimes diametrically opposed to each other. Furthermore, as a major player, its hold has never been complete and it has allowed for flexible practices. Considered as an advantage to growth, the Church has been able to absorb religious practices and customs while filtering out others in attracting followers; it has for the most part chosen adaptability instead of dogmatism.

On the other hand, this fundamental pillar was built on sandy soil since the Brazilian population, as a whole, has never shown itself to be moved by orthodox doctrines or pious moral teachings and has developed eclectic religious habits. Therefore, while it has shown itself a force that must be included in any social analysis, its influence should not be exaggerated. And although most of the time the 'church' is synonymous with the Roman Catholic Church, there is a wealth of religions in Brazil – Umbanda, Candomblé, Spiritism, traditional Protestantism, Pentecostalism, Islam, Judaism and the diverse Amerindian religions, etc. – which break up the Catholic hold. Thus, the plurality of religious beliefs constitutes an important part of the Brazilian national identity and they have influence, to varying degrees, on cultural attitudes, politics and behaviors.

The discussion concerning State structures have necessarily touched on the various components of Fraser's model: the understanding of the State and its components, the division between private and public, the articulations of institutions and interest groups and so on. However, I have also noted the importance of expanding this model so that the context

of the Brazilian situation could be better understood. To this end I included throughout my discussion the international connections and their influence on the formation of the State. Indeed we cannot discuss Brazil as a separate and isolated nation formed completely by its own internal dynamics, rather it has always developed in accord with the international context. However, as I have examined the Brazilian State formation I have also identified some social structures that are of particular historic importance and must be included in a discursive model of Brazil. These structures include repressive State forces and the Catholic church and other religious organizations.

However, despite these formal structures, I find it important to discuss those areas dealing with Brazilian identity and the multi-cultural context. Intercultural communication is not only perceived in light of international contacts but also in regards to internal cultural diversity. For us to understand Brazil in its multiplicity, we must also turn to ethnic and racial differences within the Brazilian nation State. I will now explore how these factors have emerged to produce a uniquely Brazilian matrix of relationships

Ethnic/Racial Discourses – On the Three Matrixes of Brazilian Identity

A generalized assumption concerning Brazilian identity is that it is based on the contribution of three races: Amerindian, White and Black. This 'myth of the three races' denies diversity by both homogenizing dissimilar groups into one of three general categories and also by excluding groups that cannot easily be identified under these three labels. However, this myth continues to prevail in discourses relating to the ethnic make-up of the Brazilian population. In presenting the historical narratives that developed in relationship to each of these three categories, I pay particular attention to how they relate to women. Often, however, issues on and by women have not risen above the generalized discourses in regards to the group as a whole, thereby masking the particular situation of women.

The Amerindian

Before the Portuguese arrived there were an estimated 4 million Amerindians divided among a large variety of tribes populating the Brazilian territory. Ribeiro (1986) in his detailed account of these population groups notes that there was a transfer from the specific tribal condition with all of its variances to the generic 'Indian' incorporated into the Portuguese economic pattern. This generic quality served as a way to discredit the cultural diversity of the population groups as well as to provide a new self-identification for the 'Indian.' The organization of the Amerindian groups along lines of kinship was replaced by the organization of the simple family and its integration into a social class structure developed towards mercantile capitalism. Ribeiro (1986) affirms that the reaction of each Amerindian group to the colonialists differed according to their particular cultural make-up; however, despite his caution against generalizations, Ribeiro allows for one major distinction: Amerindians who practiced agriculture were more readily integrated into the Portuguese system than those who practiced a nomadic/hunting lifestyle. The Tupi-Guarani, for instance, were largely disseminated among the settlers and did not retain their original tribal groups, while the more nomadic groups held a confrontational stance towards the Portuguese and were either killed or were able to maintain themselves in restricted areas. If the Tupi-Guarani were absorbed into the dominant Portuguese culture, they influenced the evolving society. Reports indicated that many Portuguese women and children, living on large plantations, isolated from other Portuguese and surrounded by Amerindians spoke mostly Tupi (Holanda 1995). In present-day Brazil a large percentage of cities carry Amerindian names (Piracicaba, Ubatuba, Itapecerica, Jurubatuba, etc). Of the 4 million Amerindians who inhabited the Brazilian territory in 1500, 329 thousand remain divided among 215 peoples, speaking 180 different languages. It is estimated that 30 peoples exist that have had no contact with non-Amerindians (FUNAI cited in: Na mesma Canoa 2000, p. 36).[29]

Early descriptions of the Amerindian tribes by explorers and priests probably give a better indication of European prejudices and ideologies than exact information about the

[29] See Seki (2000) for an interesting panorama of the languages currently spoken in Brazil. The article also presents a new proposal for the study of Amerindian languages, which attends to the needs of the distinct groups.

tribal culture. Raminelli (1997) cites how the nudity of the Tupinambá women provoked differing reflections by foreign observers and settlers. The Portuguese considered the Amerindian women to be highly seductive and provocative and were reported as maintaining 'perverse' sexual relationships with them. An interesting connection was made between the Amerindian woman's sexuality and cannibalistic rituals. Men who had never crossed the ocean produced drawings of natives in the New World overly dramatizing cannibalism (Raminelli 1997; Cunha 1992). Raminelli (1997) theorizes that while Europe was hunting and burning witches, the feminine stereotype that united the worst of sins within the theological misogyny of the XVI century would also represent the new world. He goes on to describe how the image of the old Amerindian woman, full of "wrinkles," "toothless," with "sagging breasts" and "foul body odor" (p.38), symbolized the degenerated condition of the Amerindian people brought on by ingestion of human flesh. This image would personify the fall into sin, the degradation of natural law and human decadence. The Portuguese missionaries believed that the degeneration of the Amerindians caused by demonic domination could only be reversed by their Christianization and consequent European domination (Raminelli 1997).

Chiavenato (1980), in his historical analysis of Brazil, stresses the genocidal policies towards the Amerindian populations that marked the initial phase of race relations in Brazil. Without enough men to down the trees, the Portuguese initially traded the Amerindians trinkets for trees. Later, after finding the natives less willing to voluntarily submit themselves to slave labor, groups of men (*bandeirantes)* forged into the interior of the country catching Amerindians as slaves, exterminating the tribes and 'settling' the area. These *bandeirantes* would historically be remembered as national heroes and courageous adventurers, who opened up the interior of Brazil for future exploration.[30,31]

Chiavenato (1980) contradicts the generally accepted notion the African slave was the preferred work force because the Amerindian could not withstand physical labor. He notes that Amerindians were less expensive than African slaves; and therefore, susceptible to

[30] Some figures available in Chiavenato (1980) show that between 1628 and 1641 the *bandeirantes,* in what would become the State of São Paulo, captured around 300,000 Guaranis.

harsher treatment since other slaves could easily be acquired. Consequently they died rapidly in slavery which would lead to the notion that Amerindians were weaker, unfit for hard labor, indolent, lazy and inferior. Just the same, the slavery of Amerindians lasted 221 years from 1534 to 1755. The Jesuits dedicated to christianizing the Amerindians built mission fortresses to protect the Amerindians from slavery and the slaughter by the *bandeirantes*. On the other hand, they carried on a paternalistic role towards them, imposing their own type of organization and religious beliefs. Expelled from São Paulo in 1643 and Maranhão in 1661 they continued to work towards legislation that would make Amerindian slavery illegal by 1755. The survival of the Amerindian tribes, especially the Guarani, their language and vestiges of their culture are largely attributed to the work of the Jesuit missions. Fervent against Indian slavery, the Jesuits did not take a similar stance in regards to African slavery, which would greatly increase due to this legislation. In fact Frei Bartolomé de las Casas, the famous defender of Amerindians, supported the traffic of African slaves with the argument that Africans were stronger and more capable of hard work (ASETT 1986).

In direct contrast to the degraded image of Amerindians, humanists argued that the naturalness of the nude Amerindians was less provocative and seductive than the arts and airs of the fully-dressed French women (Raminelli 1997). The tension between nature and culture, simplicity and artificiality had become the subject of philosophical thought in France during the period of colonization. Contact with the people of the Americas would stimulate further reflection in Europe, most notably that of Rousseau and his concept of the *bon sauvage.* The image of the Amerindians was used as a model by which Europeans could measure themselves and the effects of 'civilization.' In the image of the 'new man' the pure and unadulterated nature of humanity could be revealed, void of artificiality and the vices of civilization. In fact, the ideals of the French Revolution and the teachings of the Enlightenment were based on the philosophical premises that all humanity constituted a totality in which equality and liberty were natural and universal modes imposed by nature: all men were created equal. Thus, European contact with the Amerindians influenced the

[31] Holanda (1995) argues, however, that groups of *bandeirantes* were made up of white men, descendents of Portuguese, *mestiços* and Amerindians, and that they were motivated more by a spirit of adventure than any real attempt to settle and colonize the interior.

development of European thought.[32] Humanist philosophy, which were based on the idea of the natural and universal equality among people, would prescribe identification or compassion as the best way of dealing directly with the Amerindians as the Jesuits had already done (Schwarcz 1993; Sodré, 1984).

The freedom provided to the Amerindians by law either as a form of 'protection' or as 'tutelage' separated them, at least on paper, from the condition of slavery. The characteristics attributed to the Amerindians such as 'aversion to physical labor, imprudence, laziness, indulgence' were very similar to those characteristics attributed to the 'noble' class and thus, better suited for assimilation into the national identity. (Holanda 1995 p. 56). The romantic and sentimental interpretations of the Amerindians would be reflected back in a period of Brazilian political autonomy. It was in the context of Romanticism and of independence from Portugal that the Brazilian *intelligentsia* adopted the Indian as a symbol of national identity. Of the groups that collaborated in the colonization of Brazil – the Portuguese or European, the African, and the Amerindian tribes – only the Indian could serve as a model representative of the new Brazilian nation. The Portuguese were discarded as the very oppressor from which the new Brazilian nation had freed itself; the African, still enslaved, was considered subservient, inferior or rebellious, hardly a symbol for the slave-owning society to hold up as a model of independence and national value. The romanticized version of the Indian as a free creature, who had fought against Portuguese domination and was able to thrive independently, who exalted and was a part of the natural tropics, and whose language would become interspersed in the Brazilian form of Portuguese, thus differentiating it from the continental Portuguese, would become the rehabilitated national hero (Sodré, 1984).

The literary movement of *Indianism,* represented primarily in the poems of Gonçalves Dias and the novels of José de Alencar, the author of the trilogy *O Guarani, Ubirajara,* and *Iracema,* would not concern itself with the actual fate of the Amerindians who, for the most part, had fled to the mythical 'land without evils' to be found in the western territory of Brazil. Agrippino Grieco in recognizing the artificiality of the romanticized version of the Indian justified its merits:

[32] I am indebted to Amós Nascimento for providing me with insights on this theme.

> We agree that for the most part, it is a beautiful lie of precious romanticism. But inarguably, what exists there is of some inexplicable local originality and it all has the smell and flavor of our Brazil. If the Indian was not like this, he should have been (cited in Sodré 1984, p. 36).

Sodré (1984) holds that the identification with the Indian was actually a reaction against the image that Brazil was a 'black' nation. *Indianismo* would not last long for with the abolition of slavery a new form of national identity would become necessary. Although remnants of these images continued, the discussions on the fate of Amerindians would be reduced to small publics of missionaries, anthropologists and environmentalists.

During the 1970s the economic 'miracle' of the military regime resulted in investments in infrastructure, mineral prospecting and large construction projects under the banner of 'progress' that disregarded the fact that Amerindians were living in the territories. During the 1980s the Amerindians became a 'national security risk' and their presence on the borders was suspect and subject to military control (Cunha 1992; Roett 1992). The end of the 1970s saw the creation of many non-governmental agencies that attempted to support the Amerindians and in the 1980s the Amerindian movement reached the national arena. In the constitution of 1988, the assimilationist jargon was replaced by a listing of Amerindian rights of which the right to land is perhaps the most important (Cunha 1992). Article 231 of the 1988 Constitution reads:

> It is conceded to the Indians their social organization, customs, language, beliefs, traditions and the original right over the lands that they traditionally occupied, the Union being responsible for demarcating, protecting and respecting what belongs to them.

Current discussion about the Amerindians is tied to environmental discourses from international bodies that are pressuring the Brazilian government to stop the destruction of the rain forest and to provide land particularly to the Yanomami. During the Sarney government (1985-1990) nationalistic discourses that upheld Brazilian autonomy rivaled environmental discourses which were reinterpreted in Brazil as the imposition of foreign-made policies. Thus diverging discourses and interests collide in regards to the Amazon basin: the coalition of land and industrial interests working with the support of the armed

forces; members of congress dependent on the support of the patrimonial order to retain their seats; the international environmental lobbies; multilateral funding agencies (Roett 1992).

More recent analysis of the Amerindians stress the subjective quality of their experience. Although the notion that Amerindians were victims of practices that would take their land, destroy their culture and kill them off could be considered 'politically correct' it denies any agency on the part of the Amerindians. However, Amerindians were known to lead Portuguese explorers on long treks through the forests in search of the fountain of youth until the explorers finally collapsed from exhaustion, allied themselves with the varying factions of the wars with the French and the Dutch and against other Amerindian groups, and developed their own analysis and mythology of white people and colonial society (Cunha 1992).

In some cases, Amerindians have questioned the fusion of their own interests with environmental interests that turn them into part of the natural habitat, preserved in their 'original and pure' form, reminiscent of romanticist notions. For instance, in a short sketch on Ecotourism in Mato Grosso do Sul on the TV evening news of channel Rede Globo (July 25, 1999), Amerindians are shown living on an ecological reserve visited by tourists. One of the Amerindians remarks that all around them are mining and lumber operations but their tribe is not permitted to embark in such money-making projects because they live on an ecological reserve, and are, therefore, limited to giving 'shows' for the tourists. Anthropologist Rangel (Na Mesma Canoa 2000) affirms that the Amerindians' contact with the 'white civilization' will necessarily produce within the Amerindians a desire for some manufactured goods (jeans, aluminum pans, sunglasses, radios etc.) and questions the notion held by some that Amerindians should maintain unadulterated cultural practices.

One of the strategies by Amerindians to gain voice has been through the transmission of their culture through modern technological means such as CDs and video clips.[33] Others have agreed to participate as Amerindians in television series such as *A Muralha* on TV Globo (January – April 2000). If these efforts are politically motivated strategies to influence policy making decisions concerning their homelands, attempts to 'cash in' on the nostalgic

[33] A few examples are: The CD *Etêñiritipa – Cantos de Tradição Xavante*; and the Video clips *Wanaridobê* and *Sãluahã*: *O Retorno à Festa*.

interest[34] of environmentalists or the last attempt of a suffocated people to maintain the memory of their culture is up for interpretation.

Politically, the Amerindians began to organize themselves in the 1960s and gained more power during the 1970s. Today there are around 500 organizations throughout Brazil. As of the year 2000, Brazil had two Amerindian mayors, three vice-majors, and 29 alderman (FUNAI cited in: Na mesma Canoa 2000, p. 36). The Indian Conference 2000 held near Porto Seguro in April united around 2,600 Amerindians to protest the celebration in Porto Seguro of the 500 year anniversary of the Portuguese discovery of Brazil. The use of force by the 200 military police against the protesters who attempted to join the Amerindian March in Porto Seguro took the spotlight off the ceremony and reflected negatively on the police and government (Talento 2000). The celebration of the 500th year anniversary of the 'discovery' of Brazil in 2000 provided a forum for the discussion of the conditions of the Amerindians and a critique of the governmental policies towards the Amerindians.

The needs of Amerindian women have been tied to those of their tribes and to the whole of the Amerindian populations and have been incorporated into the more general picture of Amerindian territorial and cultural rights. The colonialist ideologies of the past regarding Amerindian women have left echoes in the current discourses. Amerindian women are still stereotyped as docile and subservient and the erotic and sensual representations continue to abound. Even those who espouse protection and rights for Amerindians have often mistakably attempted to crystallize the Amerindian cultures in their 'true' and 'authentic' forms.

Information or discussion concerning the various roles of Amerindian women within the confines of their tribes or in contact with the larger Brazilian population have not gone far beyond closed anthropological circles or Amerindian women's organizations. The particular situation of Amerindian women has often been masked and distorted by preconceived ideas of asymmetrical relations that occur within industrial societies (Rehnfeld 1989 cited in Prieto 1995). Since the relationship between public and private or between domestic, economic, and religious spheres is much more integrated within Amerindian social organizations then late capitalist welfare States or even postcolonial nation States, misperceptions among researchers

[34] See R. Rosaldo (1989) for a discussion on colonial nostalgia.

occur when attempts are made to transfer differences into hierarchical relationships (Prieto 1995). Organizing efforts by Amerindians of Central and South America have developed political strategies and language to defend women's interests, however, these particular voices have not received wide attention (Prieto 1995).

Nevertheless, public interest in the situation of Amerindians has increased due to discussions on the Brazilian 500th year anniversary and has consequently stimulated the organization and support of Amerindian political groups. With the wider distribution of CDs, videos and media programs, it seems possible that Amerindian interests will receive more public attention. Although nostalgic notions of Amerindians could result in a more modernized version of *Indianism*, the fact that Amerindians have organized politically and support groups have become more sophisticated in their analysis, could offset such tendencies.

European Women Immigrants

Researchers differ widely in respect to their descriptions of Portuguese women colonizers. Due to the lack of white women during the first process of settlement, the Portuguese Crown incited a project motivated by racist ideology of sending white women to Brazil as reproducers and transmitters of the symbols of colonization: 'color, language and religion.' The *status* of the white women as cultural transmitter had little to do with their actual preparation. Portugal, hard put to find women who were willing to settle a new colony, sent orphans and women of 'questionable origins' to become the *patroas* of the Brazilian colony (Dias, M.1984). Exactly how these women met the challenge is probably as varied as the descriptions given by historians.

Most researchers have been influenced by the paradigm of *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Freyre, 1987) in which the situation of the white woman is described as being largely constrained within the confines of the patriarchal society. Marriage or life in the convent seemed to be the two major options available to white women of the oligarchy during the colonial period. Brought up in a rigid patriarchal system, confined by a strict moral standard which guarded against amorous flirtations beyond marriage, allowed to go out only when

accompanied and then, mostly only to church, the life of the mistress has been described as considerably limited. (Saffioti 1976; Teles 1993). Reports by foreign visitors describe the jealousy that men showed in regards to their white spouses and daughters and the practice of keeping a close vigil on their activities. Those women who escaped the watchful eye of their husbands were subject to harsh punishment or murder (Teles 1993: Hanner 1978).

Within these conditions two stereotypes emerged regarding the daily life of the white woman. Some reports describe matrons who busied themselves with the efficient administration of the domestic sphere, which included overseeing the work of spinning, weaving, sewing, lacemaking, embroidery, preparation of meals, the tending of the garden, care of the children, and the organization of social events (Saffioti 1976). In this condition the mistress enjoyed considerable sway in decision making which, although limited to the domestic sphere, included at that time a wide field of productive endeavors. The other image of the mistress is of a sloven, unkempt, idle woman who was incapable of disciplining her household slaves and children. Married off as early as 13, given little or no formal education, isolated and expected to produce offspring immediately, these young women are described as having little know-how on how to manage the large task of administrating domestic production. Immaturity and ignorance are the characteristics attributed to mistresses by many foreign chroniclers. Their bodies were described as fat and flaccid and foreigners remarked on their lack of social etiquette and grace (Giacomini 1988).

However, according to M. Dias (1984) the history of upper-class women in colonial Brazil is a far cry from the enclosed and passive existence as described by other researchers. Rather, she cites examples of women who founded churches, worked in businesses or within the legal system and as political leaders. Upper-class women could own property, initiate legal processes (even against their husbands), act as witnesses and so on. Even women unable to find an adequate marriage partner, who entered the convents continued to do business for their families. On the other hand, the demands of the aristocracy were such that it was not able to absorb all of the white women during the colonial period. M. Dias (1984) and Samara (1989), for instance, cite demographic statistics to demonstrate that a large number of women living in Sao Paulo in the 19th century were poor white women. By the time of Independence

in 1822, 40% of the population in São Paulo were unmarried women, heads of families, concubines or single mothers who had to struggle daily for survival.

Obviously the conditions under which white women lived were determined by multiple contextual contingencies which produced numerous positions within the colony. However, in the description which historians have provided us, the intertwining of patriarchal tradition and racist ideology stand out. As reproducer of white Portuguese culture in a predominantly 'non-white' society, it was of primary importance to control the white woman's reproductive role. The 'right' of upper class women to own land and pass it on to their children, or the custom of transmitting property rights through the matrilineal line could be interpreted not necessarily as a progressive advance for women but as a way to effectively deny inheritance to the black offspring of sexual relationships between the *patron* and the slave woman. The standard of white feminine virginity prior to marriage and enforced faithfulness after marriage to ensure white children conjugated with the unflattering characteristics ascribed to her is complimented by the parallel standard of tolerance towards white male adultery and the sensualization of the black slave woman. The practice of using the 'legitimate defense of one's honor' by men to gain acquittal from the murder of their (supposedly) unfaithful wives or girlfriends is based on this historical context and double standard (Correa 1983).

During the latter part of the Empire, the abolitionist movement gained momentum and through their activism, women also began to question their own subordination. Some women intellectuals such as Nísia Floresta (1810-1885) and Josefina Durocher were abolitionists and also worked towards the education of women. Just the same, as white women they did not escape the prejudices of their time. For instance Nísia considered the milk of the slaves to be impure and considered that slavery had bad effects on the Brazilian family by putting it in contact with a race degenerated by slavery. Taking a definitely 'white' perspective on slavery, she theorized that it caused negative effects on the white child, who, upon hearing orders and witnessing the punishment of slaves, would later accept the maltreatment of women by men. Josefina, fearing like many white people at that time, that abolition would result in widespread chaos, proposed that slaves should be liberated in stages which would allow time for them to be educated and for them to learn to be less 'dominated by their

passions'. In fact, the law of the *Ventre Livre* (Law of the Free Womb, by which all children born to slaves would be free) was, in part, a result of her suggestions. An intellectual like Nísia, her works were directed towards men in the government (Teles 1993; Del Piore 1989).

After abolition, a policy of 'directed immigration' was installed to attract primarily white and Catholic European immigrants to work on the plantations and to 'civilize' the Brazilian nation (Alencastro & Renaux 1997). This coincided with the changes in the economic and political organization in Europe and a rise in the population rate, which produced an excess of labor particularly in Italy and Germany. The law prohibiting the entrance of Asians and Africans in Brazil was later revoked and in 1908 the first Japanese arrived. Between 1850 to 1950, approximately five million immigrants entered Brazil primarily from Italy, Portugal Spain, Germany, Japan, Syria, Turkey, Russia, Poland, and other east European nations (Alvim 1998). Immigrants sent to work on plantations were often forced into semi-slavery and dependency on the landowners; those in southern Brazil often constructed their homes and small plantations in extreme isolation; while others stayed in urban areas to work in factories and services (Alencastro & Renaux 1997; Alvim 1998). Despite the interest shown by the Brazilian government in receiving mostly white European immigrants, the major focus was not to invite new members into a 'human community' but rather to recruit 'instruments of labor' particularly for coffee plantations (Prado, Jr. 1980, p.241). In an economy geared towards the exportation of tropical products which benefited only a small elite group, there was no interest in developing an internal market; therefore, immigrants became part of a 'fluctuating' group of workers, living in extremely precarious and unstable conditions (Prado, Jr. 1980 p. 242).

By the late 19th century some white women had become politically active in the abolitionist movement and were able to make gains in regards to education. The early feminist movement that worked toward the franchise in the 1930s was led primarily by white middle-class women who also held elitist views (Besse 1996). Into the 1970s mostly white women formed feminist and liberation movements to struggle for sexual equality in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, reproductive freedom, and so on

Since the 1970s, white women have benefited the most from economic expansion, and the changes in behavior and values in reference to women's social roles. The increase of

women within the labor market has been most visible in the urban areas and within the middle-class or among women with higher education. With the expansion of secondary education, the rise of technical and professional employment opportunities, and the increase in availability of consumer goods, the middle-class woman has experienced an increase in her living standards (Rosemberg, Pinto & Negrão 1982). Despite the fact that entrance to federal and State universities is based solely on test results and that education is free, few working class or black people reach the university level. In fact, white middle-class women have greater access to educational degrees than black men and women. Educated university women however, have experienced problems of exclusion in regards to job opportunities and equality of pay. In general, white women continue to work in occupational 'ghettos' with the consequence of receiving lower salaries than white men. Other factors such as age, number of children, and region have influenced these figures. Nevertheless, together with gender, race is a major factor in the earning power of women.[35]

Thus, the conditions of white European women within the Brazilian context could not be described in general universal terms. The predominance of women of European origin within the Brazilian elite has not meant the absence of such women among the poor. However, the most recent political efforts of white women have been more vocal and have had more success in reaching the public arena.

Afro-Brazilian Women

For almost four centuries, 100 million Africans were enslaved or killed to provide for the growing mercantile system in the Americas (Curtin 1969).[36] The trafficking of slaves significantly altered the demographic, economic and cultural development of the African continent which had by the time of European invasion formed a complex system of commerce, developed advanced techniques of agriculture and established universities. However the complexity of Africa would become simplified into the single image of a continent inhabited by nomadic tribes of hunters – an image which could easily be

[35] See Bruschini (1994) for more detailed information regarding women and work.
[36] These figures are being updated in a research project on the Atlantic slave trade census by the W.E.B. DuBois Center at Harvard University

stereotyped as primitive, backward, undeveloped, illiterate and which would justify the 'civilizing' effects of European domination. As with the Amerindians, discourses questioning the humanity of Africans, their general character, intelligence and social organization were brought up as justifications for slavery.

Biblical exegesis of the colonial era attempted to demonstrate that Africans as descendents of Cain, were destined to slavery and servitude (ASETT 1986), while other ideologies based on the 'scientific' study of humanity argued for European dominance which based its superiority on the civilizing effects of Christianity, the temperate climate of Europe, and higher intelligence. Whether the rhetoric was theological or scientific, the Portuguese crown needed to justify slavery for several reasons: first, Portugal did not have at its disposal a population large enough to colonize the Brazilian territory; second, the type of agriculture developed in Brazil favored extensive plantations requiring a large number of workers; finally, slave trade was very lucrative for the Crown, first as a form of merchandise and later as a form of labor (Prado Jr. 1980).

Due to the supposed destruction of documents ordered by Rui Barbosa, it has become difficult for historians to reconstruct the number and the ethnic origin of the slaves who arrived to Brazil. Estimates run from 3 to 14 million of which the vast majority appears to have come from two regions of Africa: West Africa near the Guinea Gulf, known as the Slave Coast (Verger 1992); and the area of the Bantus consisting in the regions of Angola, Mozambique, and the Congo (Baptista 1986). Whatever the exact figure might be, the population of Africans or those of African decent came to dominate the demographic scene in the colony. Official statistics, for example from 1817-1818 show that well over half of the population was made up of mulattos, free slaves and slaves (Baptista 1986).

The colonists adopted strategies to dissimulate the ethnic origin, cultural traditions and languages of the Africans by separating families and tribes so that they would not be able to organize among themselves an effective resistance force. The terminology used to name the Africans indicates this attempt to wipe out notions of cultural heritage or particularities. The generic term, *peça* (piece) or *peça de ébano* (piece of ebony) for each African person taken from the ship obviously denotes the dehumanizing and commercial character projected on to the African slaves. Dividing up the slaves into two major categories – *negros de nação*

(nation blacks) for those slaves born in Africa and *crioulos* for those slaves born in the New World – denied any particular cultural origin of the slaves.[37]

Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala*, first published in 1933, has become a classic sociological analysis of plantation life in northeastern Brazil during the colonial period and is perhaps the single most influential book in regards to how slavery and racism have been understood within the Brazilian context. The revolutionary character of this classic work resides in the fact that Freyre concentrated on the private lives of those living and working on the colonial plantation, dealing with matters that had evaded the academic world (sexual relationships, foods, customs, etc.) and in his positive evaluation of miscegenation during a time when the ideology of racial purity was taking hold in Europe and influencing racial policies in Brazil. He holds that slavery in Brazil was less harsh and brutal than in the United States, arguing that 'benevolent' or even affectionate relationships between slave and master existed. Accordingly, he holds that Brazil developed a "racial democracy" in which cordiality rather than offensive racist practices would become the mode of racial integration. However, many authors have questioned Freyre's analysis.

Historians have pointed to the diversification of conditions under slavery and that the problem with Freyre's account is that it was generalized for the entire slavery period and for the expansive Brazilian territory. Woortmann (1987) theorizes that the northeast experienced a period of economic stagnation in which economic development was transferred to other regions. Under these conditions it is possible that the traditional patriarchal organization was reinforced on the plantation and a paternalistic relationship could have developed between slave and master leading to 'benevolent' feelings. For instance, one could imagine that children growing up on the plantation could develop affectionate relationships with their 'wet-nurses' or 'black mothers.' There were cases in which the master was godfather to the slave children, but this relationship remained vertical and treatment was benevolent as long as the slaves acquiesced to a subordinate position. Woortman (1987) goes on to argue that slavery in the south was more commercially oriented and less paternalistic. If the slaves were allowed to organize families or given a plot of land, this was a way to transfer the cost of

[37] See Santa Cruz (1986) for more detailed information about expressions and idioms referring to African slaves in the Americas.

maintaining the slaves to the slaves themselves. In fact, studies carried out in the southern part of Brazil have shown multiple patterns in regards to the insertion of slaves in an urban setting (Cardoso F. H. 1962; Fernandes, F. 1978).

Chiavenato (1980) refutes any idea of benevolent relationships under slavery. Starting with a horrifying account of the transportation of slaves to Brazil, he then goes on to describes the dehumanizing methods of examination by prospective buyers, the brutal working conditions from which most slaves died within a span of seven and a half years, and sadistic practices that slaves were forced to endure in Brazil, thereby contradicting any notion of benevolent slavery. With Chiavenato we read of the mutilations, amputations, tortures, and sexual abuses of slaves carried out by white men, women and children.

Giacomini (1988), who also refers to Chiavenato's accounts, describes some of the contradictions and conflicts which occurred in the utilization of women slaves within the home of the white family as wet-nurses and caretakers of children, as housekeepers, and cooks. She analyzes the situation in which the reproductive function of the black woman slave is incorporated into the white family. A common practice was for women slaves who had recently given birth to be rented out or sold as wet-nurses and their newborn children sent to the Róda (house for abandoned children, where the mortality rate was approximately 45%), since the cost of bringing up a slave child was more than simply buying an adult slave. The slave's physiological capacity to give milk paradoxically worked against her maternal potential to have and care for her own children. Within the white society two contradictory perspectives in reference to the wet-nurse developed. One perspective blamed the wet-nurse for any behavioral or physical problems the child might have. The slave's barbarous habits, her custom of putting superstitious fantasies and corrupt ideas into the children's heads are cited as the depreciating influence of the wet-nurse. Doctors developed all sorts of ingenious ways of determining the exact nutritional value of the nurse's milk and warned against the transmission of syphilis by the slave to the newborn. The myth during this time that sexual relations with a virgin slave could cure a man of syphilis made the transmission by the wet-nurse to the baby a very possible result. However, Freyre (1980) also points to the possibility that many babies also transmitted syphilis to the wet-nurse. The medical literature of the 19th century advises mothers to nurse their own babies instead of employing wet nurses who in

their attempt at revenge would eat foods prejudicial to their milk or put pepper on their nipples (Mott 1991). Despite these depreciating perspectives, other interpretations characterize the wet-nurse as noble, devoted, generous and loving (Giacomini 1988; Mott 1991).

The slave woman was also employed to satisfy the sexual desires of the male members of the slave-owning family. According to Giacomini (1988), it was not slavery alone but the patriarchal organization of the family which allowed for the manifestation of male sexuality outside the limits of marriage and stressed the importance of male sexual virility while limiting (white) female sexuality and placing the woman in a submissive role in relationship to the wishes of the male. Not only the male head of the family had access to sexual relationships with his slaves, but it was also common practice for his sons to initiate themselves sexually with slave women. In other situations the black slave was prostituted out as a form of raising income for the master. Giacomini (1988) argues that the slave women's sexuality was entirely dismissed from any type of affectionate or obligatory ties, from concerns for procreation or transmission of wealth, from any religious or moral values, and was appropriated under only one aspect: that of sexual object. On the other hand, the exaltation of her sensuality was applied to justify her exploitation. In a paradoxical reversion of roles, she was turned into the agent of seduction and the white man the object of her abundant sexuality.

The erotic qualities of the slave women were cited by foreigners visiting Brazil, which indicate the continuation of the internationalization of the erotic-exotic image of the Brazilian woman which had begun with the comments already cited concerning the Amerindian woman. Avê-Lallement cites a German doctor who reported:

> It is not possible to find anywhere else such a wealth of forms as in the black women of Bahia....they all have a proud posture in which the back is inclined backward in a way that makes their breasts protrude...there is in this somewhat forced walk a kind of provocation (cited in Verger 1992, pp. 104-5).

A Portuguese official complaining of the custom of adorning the slaves with luxurious clothes and jewels states:

> (...) with such luxury, the slaves cause low morals among the captains, perverting white men, which results in the crossing of races and the always increasing number of people of color, which is in no way convenient.(Amaral, cited in Verger 1992, p. 103)

According to Chiavenato (1980) and Giacomini (1988), the relationship of the black slave with her white mistress was conditioned by the patriarchal context. The domestic sphere of the plantation was one not only of consumption but also of production of such items as candles, clothes, embroideries, and so on, which was left in most cases to the administration of the mistress. Extremely isolated on large plantations, given minimal education or training, married off while still adolescent, and having grown up around slaves, the white woman had little reason to question her racial superiority. Jealousy of the sexual attention given to the slave women by her husband was yet another factor that could create antagonism. Historical reports and journals cite the numerous brutalities, tortures and even amputations which women slaves suffered from their mistresses (Prado Jr.1980; Giacomini 1988).

The polarizing discourses of paternalistic benevolence represented by Freyre (1987) versus brutal subjugation in reference to slavery represented by Chiavenato (1980) and Giacomini (1988) have been partially broken apart by other historical studies that have focused on specific historic and geographic contexts. Reports of black slaves in the market place demonstrate how slave women were able to exercise some control in terms of cultural practices and at the same time earn enough to buy their freedom. Verger (1992) argues with Bastide that the system of open markets organized in Bahia were based on the African markets of the *Nagô* region of West Africa. The markets in Brazil formed a social space that not only provided for the exchange of merchandise but also the exchange of cultural information and the introduction of African folklore, clothing style and foods into the Brazilian society. Verger (1992) postulates that the practice of the African women in the area of Bahia to adorn themselves with jewelry and beautiful dresses and their commercial skills in the market place is due to their urban origins in Africa, whereas African women slaves in other regions of Brazil who originated from rural Africa did not demonstrate such characteristics.

However, according to Figueiredo's (1997) research, women slaves or *as negras de tabuleiro* ('black women with trays' in reference to the trays of sweets, cheeses, cakes, etc. that black women carried on the street as vendors) also had to use their marketing abilities for survival. In west-central Brazil, during the initial mining period, women slaves or *forras* (emancipated slaves) sold food products and other goods to the various mining villas passing on their profits to their masters. Although they carried out an important function, they also caused headaches for the authorities who had difficulty in controlling their commerce. Slave women were able to keep some of their profits for themselves, carry on contraband of gold and other precious stones, send food products to the *quilombos* (communities of escaped slaves), and hide fugitive slaves. For these reasons the authorities persecuted them, and transgressors would have to endure the confiscation of their goods, jail time, fines and public floggings.

It was common for owners to prostitute the women slaves out or for the women themselves to enter into prostitution in order to pay their masters or pay taxes ordered by the Crown. M. Dias (1984), in her research on 19th century São Paulo, affirms that unlike the *Casa grande e Senzala*, slave women were used for commercial rather than domestic purposes. Slave women worked as vendors, provided laundry services for a particular clientele, or worked as prostitutes. Sometimes they were given their own rooms and expected to return an agreed amount to their owners each month.

In regards to their sexual behavior, and without denying the obvious hierarchical position between master and slave or the common practice of raping slave women, other authors have gathered evidence that indicates the existence of relationships of mutual affection between master and slave. Reports include those of men abandoning their wives for slaves or of wives denouncing their husband's amorous relationship with slave women (Sleno1997).

Recent analysis of African influence in Brazil attempt to show the subject position of the slaves as agents in the development of Brazilian culture and underline their influence in the emerging Brazilian society according to their cultural traditions, and according to the options available to them, which went beyond manual labor and influenced technical development and cultural and religious practices. Multiple ways of resistance by men as well

as women slaves have been uncovered. They include subtle acts of sabotage as for example in breaking household items 'accidentally', in 'forgetting' orders; in feigning sickness or deliberately drinking teas which would cause sickness; to more direct acts of suicide, abortion, murder of masters and mistresses or in the organization of revolts and escapes from the plantation (Giacomini 1988; Goulart1971; Mott 1991).

It was common to read within the colonial newspaper announcements of slaves who had fled, and although many were recaptured, there were enough successful attempts that groups of slaves were able to form communities. These *quilombos* were places where fugitive slaves could attempt to reconstruct their African identity and customs and form protective communities against slavery. Hundreds of *quilombos* were formed throughout Brazil starting in 1575 until the abolition of slavery and ranged widely in size from a few people hidden in the forest living off the fruits of the land to larger organizations with an established military force. Most of them were destroyed and the slaves recaptured or killed, although the most famous of which, Palmares, boasted 20,000 inhabitants and withstood attacks from the military for 67 years. The legend of Zumbi, the leader of Palmares, became a symbol of rebellion (Chiavenato 1980).

Due to the disproportion of men to women slaves, male members of *quilombos* would habitually kidnap black and white women. However, some *quilombos* were lead by women. Aqualtune, daughter of the King of the Congo in Africa who led armies to defend her father's reign was sold as a slave in Brazil, escaped to the *quilombo* Palmares and is known as the grandmother of Zumbi. Filipa Aranha lead a quilombo in Pará and Teresa de Quariterê was leader of the quilombo of Quariterê in Mato Grosso. Zeferina led a revolt in Bahia against the *capitães-de-mato* in 1826 (Teles 1993) and Mariana Crioula, together with her husband Manuel Congo, led the largest slave revolt in Rio de Janeiro (Mello 2001).

The above description dedicates considerable space to the conditions of slavery during the colonial period. As stated before, slavery lasted almost 400 years in Brazil, which indicates that it was a system that had to adjust to the changing economic, social and political patterns within each of the regions of Brazil thereby producing varying forms of dominance, submission and resistance. Considering that slavery composed part of the economic, political and social context during almost four-fifths of the nation's history, it stands to reason that the

marks of slavery would continue to have their affects on the current Brazilian situation. That the colonization of Brazil would not have been possible without the forced labor of slaves is a historical 'given' and that this in turn produced a society which devalues manual labor is currently evident in the low wages paid for domestic services, farmwork, masonry, carpentry, street cleaning or most any other type of physical labor.

The large number of African descendents in the Brazilian population produced controversy concerning Brazilian identity formation. Afraid of racial divisions, the Brazilian government encouraged miscegenation in the hopes of dispersing and dissolving the African influence. By applying European ideas of racial superiority to the Brazilian context, they produced a means to preserve traditional social hierarchies (Schwarcz 1993).

After abolition, the Brazilian government brought in a large number of European immigrants who displaced Afro-Brazilian workers, 'whitened' the population and assured a more European form of development. The propagation in Europe of the possibility of quick wealth attracted European immigrants, who with dreams of social ascension would never question their racial privilege. The exclusion of the Afro-Brazilian population from economic opportunities caused some of their fractions to consider the return to slavery an easier route than integration into the paid labor force (Cardoso, H. 1987). That the black women was able to find some type of work within the informal market or in the provision of services as she had done as a slave, made her economic role of vital importance during this time (Teles 1993).

From the time of abolition to the 1930s former slaves and new Afro-Brazilian workers organized primarily around cultural issues: the creation of samba schools, new *candomblés*; and the development of a black press in the south (Cardoso, H. 1987). During the 1930s they were able to consolidate some initiatives, particularly in the south and develop a unified front – *Frente Negra Brasileira* (the Brazilian Black Front). The *Frente Negra* offered medical dental and hospital services to Afro-Brazilians and maintained schools, daycares, pharmacies and clinics as well as literacy, music, history, geography, mathematics and language classes. In 1932 the Nationalist Radical Party, which had as its objective "the political and social union of the Brazilian descendents of the black race," was founded by a representative of the *Frente Negra* (De Paula 1998, p. 165). Black men and women volunteers participated in the

armed mobilization against the installation of the Vargas dictatorship and in favor of the democratic constitution by fighting on a variety of fronts, particularly the *Legião Negra de São Paulo* (The Black Legion of São Paulo) (De Paula 1998).

The victorious Vargas government closed the Nationalist Radical party, prohibited the organization of the *Frente Negra* and attempted to wipe out the memory of the civil war of 1932.[38] Contrary to the cultural types of organization, the black political movement during this period worked towards the integration of blacks into society, their primary concern being employment (Cardoso, H. 1987). During the 1950s the writing of a new constitution brought out resurgence in black political participation which attempted to both integrate black people into the white society while also emphasizing black identity and the return to African origins.

The military coup in 1964 once again silenced this movement and black political and cultural initiatives were repressed from mainstream discussion or participation. The police and military upheld the hegemonic dominance of the State in espousing the Catholic Church as the national religion while subordinating non-Christian religious practices, the samba schools, the exercise of *capoeira* (African form of self-defense) and Afro-Brazilian music.

Once again with the *abertura* process and the rewriting of the constitution, Afro-Brazilian groups organized for political as well as cultural rights, new Afro-Brazilian organizations were founded, and there was a resurgence in African cultural popularity among the general population (Cardoso, H. 1987). The constitution of 1988 calls for the recognition of lands that were formerly quilombos and the concession of land titles to the residents (Article 68). The task of recognizing these areas requires historical and anthropological research making it a slow and often expensive process. Of the 724 areas identified by 2000, only 5 communities had received a title. Due to pressure from the Fundação Palmares founded in 1988 to secure constitutional authority and recognize lands, and the interest shown by the First-Lady Ruth Cardoso, herself a well-known anthropologists, funds have been

[38] See De Paula (1932) for a historical reconstruction of the war of 1932 which contradicts some of the established interpretations by the left and the right.

allocated which could allow for the recognition of more titles in the next years (Nahass 2000).[39]

Cultural forms of maintaining African identity and organizing resistance are present in the practice and resilience of the various forms of the *Iorubá* religion found in Brazil, most commonly known as *Candomblé* and other practices such as *capoeira*, African dress, cuisine and music. Queiroz (1988, p. 71) asserts that if at the time of independence the Brazilians chose to identify themselves with the idealized Amerindian (Indianism), today what is considered 'authentically Brazilian' are those practices in which the African civilizations left their mark. The larger number of Africans brought to Brazi, the fact that slaves were utilized throughout the territory and in various functions rather than being used exclusively for agriculture in one geographic area, tolerance for African and syncretic religious practices, and miscegenation are some of the factors which attribute to the diffusion of African or Brazilian-African cultural practices throughout most of the country.

Today, most black women work in manual labor primarily in domestic occupations such as maids, cooks and nannies or as farmworkers and are at the bottom of the scale in terms of salary when compared to black men or white women (IBGE/PNAD 1990, cited in Ministro do Trabalho 1997, p. 8). Black women, on an average, earn 50 percent of what white women earn (FIBGE 1994 cited in Geledés 1995, p.8-9). There is a concentration of women within the informal market in activities which generate low income, which lack the protection of labor laws and social security provisions, which are often done within the home or on the street and which are generally part-time. The informal market is extremely important since it absorbs more than 40% of the non-agricultural labor in Brazil. Domestic services are responsible for 7.8 % of this total and small productive activities within the family or independently represent 34.5% of non-agricultural labor which include such occupations as seamstress, store clerk, office assistant, bus driver, construction worker and independent salesperson (Abreu, Jorge & Sorj 1994, p. 155, 167). According to a study of four major metropolitan cities in Brazil – Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo – there is a marked difference between the earnings of women and men workers and between

[39] For more information on the current status of *quilombos* and the 1988 law granting territorial titles to former quilombos see Gusmão (1995) and the site of the Fundação Cultural Palmares on the Internet: www.minc.gov.br/fcp.

women according to race. Within the informal labor market or in small businesses, women earn about half of the average male income and women of color earn about half of what white women earn (Abreu, Jorge & Sorj 1994 p.165).

The seemingly obvious economic difficulties that most black women experience have not become major discursive topics. Rather the importance of race and ethnicity and gender have been masked by the enormous economic differences in Brazil. If race was a major issue of concern during the early 1900s, class inequalities have absorbed the attention of social scientists since this time to the extent that the existence of racism has been disqualified or considered a consequence of the class struggle. The concept of 'women' has been hidden within the non-gendered and non-ethnic specific idioms such as the 'poor,' the 'masses,' the 'underclass,' the 'proletariat.' Such discursive language indicates the specific forms of racism and sexism that have developed in the Brazilian context and affected African-Brazilian women more than any other group. Thus, Afro-Brazilian women's groups have developed discourses that emphasize the importance of conjugating class with race and gender.

In recent years there has been an attempt to recover the contribution of black men and women and the question of racism along with other 'minority' issues has come into the public debate since the democratization process. Black women organizing politically have had to deal with issues of autonomy and identity. Critics consider that black women organizing separately act to divide and weaken the black movement, while other critics hold that such organizations divide and weaken the feminist movement. Whether black women should organize under the banner of the black movement, the feminist movement, the worker's movement or autonomously are questions that continue to be debated (Geledés 1995). Since 1985, black women have organized events and participated in policymaking activities. Their participation in the writing of the constitution was directed towards worker's benefits particularly in regards to maternity leave and the rights of domestic servants, and the explicit promotion of equality in regards to race, color, origin, and sex (Geledés1995). Within electoral politics a principle figure has been Benedita da Silva, a charismatic black woman from the lower class, who became the first black woman federal representative. Since this time, Benedita has continued to hold public office and has become an important symbol of black female political participation.

The São Paulo Black Women's Collective was created in response to the appointment of 15 white women to the State Council on the Feminine Condition (CECF). After their mobilization, one black representative and an alternate were added to the Council and a Black Women's Council to the CECF was formed (Alvarez 1990). Other organizations such as Axé of Bahia have celebrated African-Brazilian culture and have developed youth educational projects, while organizations such as Geledés work primarily in the area of violence against women. In the last decades there has been a growth in the number of organized national and international events and actions promoting racial equality.

However, an understanding of the interplay of race and gender roles would not be complete without an examination of the particular status afforded people of 'mixed origin' for it is in the ideology of 'whitening' that the complex strategies of a unique system of racism in Brazil can be better understood. Therefore, the myth of the three races developed into a new discursive paradigm, which focused on the mixing of the three into one universal representation of Brazilian identity.

Mulata, Mestiça, Morena as the Ideal Brazilian Woman

The initial lack of white Portuguese women and the 'availability' of the Amerindian women to the male settlers; the institutionalized practice of raping slave women; the 'strange' habit of the Brazilian born Portuguese to prefer mulatto women; and the general lack of sexual repugnance along ethnic/racial lines among the population produced a nation of people of 'mixed' origin. Holanda (1995) asserts that the contact with the Amerindians and the consequent mixing among the two populations is what allowed Portugal to consolidate the large country without extraordinary physical or military force. Exactly how to deal with this phenomenon was the theme of nationalistic interest especially upon independence. The placement of women along racial/ethnic lines during the colonial period was most succinctly stated by Sant'Anna (1980) in his famous dictum: "The black women in the field, the *mulata* in bed, and the white women in the home." However, it would be the *mulata* who would gain precedence as the representative image of Brazilian women.

As stated earlier, *Indianism* was the first attempt to create a national identity that would differentiate itself from the dominating colonizers and the black slaves. It was a way in which the intellectual class could idealize the Brazilian tropical richness personified in the image of the pure and heroic Amerindian. The philosophy and literature of *Indianism* was a result of a historic interplay of reflections and reinterpretation among Europeans in Europe and in the Americas as they came into contact with the Amerindians or with reports about them. Dating back to the Jesuit missionaries and their paternalistic defense of the Amerindians and re-appropriated within the philosophy of romanticism and humanism that formed the basis for the project of the Enlightenment, the idealized version of the Amerindian was rehabilitated by the Brazilian *intelligentsia* as symbol of national identity. This ideology included the view of the Indian woman as a symbol of natural and authentic beauty, as represented by *Iracema* in the well-known works of Alencar.

However this image was not so easily transferred onto a largely black population. The image of African or Afro-Brazilian women was never accepted as a model, even though her role as sexual object had lasted for almost four centuries, for her condition as an exploited slave or laborer could not easily blend into a symbol which would represent the aspirations of a new nation. Even before the abolition of slavery in 1888 the large number of people of African descent posed a 'problem' for those concerned in building a new nation. The European model represented those of the colonizers and was entirely unrealistic for a population in which people of European descent represented only a small proportion.

Reports made by European foreigners of the 'genetic degeneration' of the Brazilian population were cause for concern among the Brazilian political elite. Comments of Count Gobineau are representative of the general racist ideology towards people of African descent:

> (...) not even one Brazilian has pure blood, because the examples of marriage between whites, Indians and blacks is so disseminated that the nuances of color are infinite, causing a degeneration of a very depressing type in the lower as well as the upper classes (quoted in Chiavenato 1980, p.170).

These comments coupled with the colonialist ideology of the general inferiority of people in tropical lands and the influence of social Darwinism motivated Brazilian

intellectuals to find a solution to this problem. Arguments, from the intellectual, Sílvio Romero in favor of abolition demonstrate a racist motive:

> By natural selection, after having received the necessary auxiliary, the white type will still become preponderant until becoming as pure and beautiful as in the old world. This will happen when already acclimated to this continent. Two factors will contribute largely for this result: on the one hand, the extinction of the trafficking of Africans and the constant disappearance of the Indian, and on the other hand, European emigration. (cited in Chiavenato 1980, p. 174)

According to Chiavenato (1980) the abolition of slavery was not based on humanitarian ideals but rather on economic, political and racist interests of the Brazilian elite. The ideology of 'whitening' (*embranquecimento)* a largely black population would become an institutionalized mode of 'dissolving' the 'black stain' on the Brazilian people. The ideology of whitening was given impetus particularly after the war of the Triple Alliance that exterminated a largely black Brazilian army and changed the Brazilian demographic picture, making 'whitening' a more foreseeable goal through the emigration of Europeans. The concepts of 'fusion', 'mixing,' 'syncretism,' 'junction,' 'convergence,' and so on provided a new vocabulary which would be used to describe the results of miscegenation, held up as the answer to the Brazilian 'race' problem.[40] As a result, the *mulata* became the symbol that would represent Brazilian women, but a symbol that would not account for the variety of ethnic identities that form part of the Brazilian multi-cultural context.

Within the international arena the stereotyped sensual and exotic nature of Brazilian women has been the major representative image. Starting with the descriptions of the Amerindian woman during colonial times, and later including the sensual qualities of the African slave, the image of the Brazilian woman evolved to portray the *mulata* as representative of Brazilian feminine sensuality. The international stereotype of Brazilian women that began with colonialist discourses has been internalized within the Brazilian culture, which in turn produces this image for export. Whether selling Brazilian tourist packages or advertising for the Brazilian Book Fair in Frankfurt, Germany, the image of the semi-nude Brazilian women is used to attract attention. The construction of the 'mulata for

[40] See Ferretti (1995) for a more detailed discussion of these terms.

export' has become big business for those involved in organizing tours and shows for tourists. Giacomini (1992) describes how such woman, produced through courses, eliminatory exams, and constant monitoring, develop techniques in "controlled professional seduction" and are required to maintain a globalized body shape that corresponds more to the "awaited" Brazilian woman rather than to her "actual" body type – above average height, small waist, precisely measured buttocks and breasts. The increase in sex tourism within Brazil has been considered as a consequence of such representations (see Prestelo & Dias 1996; Agisra 1990; Giacomini 1992).

Meis (Meis & Shiva 1993) makes the link between sex tourism and colonialist ideology:

> Here, the desire is projected on to an 'exotic' woman, a non-white woman, a woman of the colonized, who due to her poverty has to serve the white man. The desire for the subject and colonized woman is related to the desire for the 'noble savage'. In this case, too, the relationship is not active and loving but consumerist and passive, based on the purchasing power of the D-Mark, the dollar or the yen. The purchasing power also enables Western and Japanese working-class men, from time to time, to enjoy playing the colonial lord and master (p.135).

Thus ethnocentric stereotypes of Northerners and the racist attitudes of Brazilians, have converged in taking a country rich in ethnic diversity and narrowing the scope of women's participation to that of sexual object. Within Brazil and internationally, Brazilian women have suffered stifling limits in their representation.

In an interesting twist, the mixing of the races, which was first designed as a means of diluting the African influence, was later reinterpreted as lack of racist ideology in Brazil. That there appeared to be no sexual repugnance between the races and that 'mixing' was tolerated demonstrated that a racial democracy was developing. Freyre would go on to argue that those of 'mixed' race, mestiços and mulattos revealed a higher intelligence and became better leaders. Other writers have considered that in Brazil a 'fusion' of the races or 'syncretism' of the cultural traditions has produced a hybrid which is considered the ideal.[41] The celebration of the *mulata* is a reflection of this interpretation, holding that women of mixed race are more

[41] See Ferretti (1995) for a description of the different ideologies of syncretism.

sensual and beautiful. The force of Freyre's interpretation produced the generalized notion within Brazil that a 'racial democracy' existed.

That people of color are provided the possibility for social ascension has given the impression that a non-racist context exists in which only individual work and perseverance are needed to become successful. This has produced a context in which solutions to the problems of inequalities are sought within the individual (the private sphere) rather than within social public structures and norms. Under these conditions Brazilians have tended to identify themselves as any number of 'non-black' categories thus diminishing the possibility for a strong black-identified anti-racist movement. The results of a questionnaire carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 1976, showed that Brazilians attribute to themselves 135 different colors (Folha 1995). This is a far cry from the severe black-white duality that is present in countries such as the United States. The particular intersections of race/ethnicity that developed in Brazil should not be confused with the racial segregation that occurred in other countries. In the United States, the 'negro' or 'colored' population as it was named was, for the most part, conceived as a unified group separate from the 'white' population. Although South Africa differentiated between 'black' and 'colored' these designations were systematically and rigidly installed and do not fit the flexible divisions in Brazil, which depend not only on skin color but also on educational and economic status.

A new generation of intellectuals have had to uncover the underlying racist ideology that the notion of racial democracy masks by arguing that it has consistently upheld a racial and cultural hierarchy. Sathler & Nascimento (1997) hold that the ideology of fusing the best characteristics of the white, the Indian and the black to make a unique Brazilian blend could be understood as a form of homogenizing supposedly 'dangerous' factions of the population and denying cultural identity among the African population. They have also demonstrated how supposedly 'progressive' leaders of Liberation Theology have incorporated racist attitudes within their proposals by allowing for the assimilation of some African rituals within the religious services while holding others to be diabolic. More blatant forms of racism include the use of 'good appearance' *('boa aparência'*) as a necessary requirement in job announcements, the existence of exclusively white clubs and restaurants, and the

employment until recently of almost exclusively white actors in TV programs and commercials.[42]

Within the last 20 years, numerous organizations have emerged to work against the racist policies, norms and attitudes directed towards people of African descent. Black movements have questioned the use of the term 'mulatto' since it is a derivative from a term signifying a cross between a mule and a horse and because it has been employed as a middle-term to mask Afro-Brazilian identity not only in regards to political consciousness but also in mapping the demographic situation of people of African origin. Afro-Brazilians working politically were able to incorporate within the national program of human rights that the categories blacks, mulattos and colored (*pardos*) be identified within the black population (Ministro do Trabalho 1997 p.8) and have worked so that the category 'race' be re-instituted in the national census and data of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

The new idiom of 'citizen participation and responsibility' (*cidadania*) has been appropriated by organizations working towards the elimination of racism and in support of ethnic diversity. Within the Brazilian context this is a relatively new phenomenon. Although groups such as the *Frente Negra* worked towards civil participation and rights, most organizations have devoted more efforts towards cultural expression by incorporating the cultural practices of the Afro-Brazilians and Amerindians into the larger cultural scenario. In the United States, for instance, although African-Americans have made gains in such areas as civil rights and affirmative action (although these gains have often had setbacks) and although jazz music has been embraced as an authentic type of American music, cultural practices have not been so easily assimilated into the general population as they have been in Brazil. Therefore, while Afro-Brazilians have had more difficulty organizing politically due to lack of a defined political identity, the general population has been much more accepting of music, dance, religion, cuisine, clothing and language originating from the African or African-Brazilian culture such that these practices are considered to be truly Brazilian practices rather than pertaining only to a specific ethnic group within Brazil (Queiroz 1988).

[42] For more examples of racist attitudes and behaviors see: Folha (1995);Monteiro (1997); Subervi-Velez & Oliveira (1991).

I have attempted to show that racism as it is manifested in Brazil is unique to the Brazilian context by tracing how discourses in and about Brazil portray the Amerindian, the European, and Afro-Brazilian as the three main cultural ethnic groups traditionally considered to be the most prominent in forging the Brazilian identity. This myth of the three races is a myth because these three races do not exist as real entities; that is to say, that all three can be infinitely subdivided into differing ethnic groups, tribes, nations, cultures, and so on. The result has been that the rich ethnic diversity of the Africans, among the Amerindian peoples, of the various groups of European, Asian and the Middle Eastern immigrants has been arbitrarily divided into three homogeneous groups. These three groups have been positioned along an evolutionary line in which the African and Amerindian strive towards the superior white grouping or they could be conceived as important contributions to the Brazilian society, whereby the members of each group contribute according to their stereotypical characteristics (i.e. the naturalness of the Amerindians; the labor force of the Africans; the intellect of the European or in gendered terms: the docility of the Amerindian women, the labor of the black maid, the domesticity of the white mother and we could also include the sensuality of the *mulata*).

This myth was later developed into the notion of mixing and blending which denied specific cultural identities and was later interpreted as racial democracy. In terms of daily life, the interaction among people of differing ethnic groups in Brazil appears to occur with a natural lack of hostility. Contrary to other nations where dichotomous and open conflicts between black/white or citizen/foreigner developed, the presence of white people in the favelas, the frequency of 'inter-racial' marriages, the emergence of wealthy black athletes and musicians, and the large number of people of 'mixed' race seem to give the impression of equality, negotiation, diplomacy, cordiality, and tolerance. The evolution of racism in Brazil, while influenced by international discourses, developed within a specific context which produced relationships of power that are seemingly less overt, more difficult to define and therefore, less often contested (see Folha 1995; DaMatta 1988 Lindgren Alves 2000).

The particular representation of Brazilian women has evolved from the descriptions of the Amerindian woman during colonial times, later including the sensual qualities of the black slave to finally portrait the *mulata* as representative of Brazilian feminine sensuality.

The celebration of the *mulata* as the main representative symbol of Brazilian women, nationally as well as internationally, has resulted in an eroticized image limiting the scope of Brazilian women's representation. I have attempted to show some severe limitations of this representation, especially as a form of masking the strategies of racism in Brazil. While aesthetic values will probably continue to remain very strong in regards to Brazilian women, the exploitation of sensuality has begun to be questioned. It appears that the work of the African-American women's groups are at the forefront of this struggle, since they have necessarily had to combine the complex issues of class, gender and race within their agendas.

Contexts for the Women's Movement against Violence

I have gone to considerable length in presenting the historic and ideologically differentiated discourses on the Brazilian context as they relate to my expanded discourse model based on Fraser and the need for an intercultural framework as expressed by Dias in order to set a basis for my discussion on the women's movement against violence. I have attempted to demonstrate the complexity of the positions of women within the Brazilian context particularly by discussing the variations in relationship to geographic location, class position and race or ethnicity that have emerged as the most important categorizations in the formation of Brazilian identity. Within this discussion I have also necessarily touched on the major institutions and interlocutors that have formed this context and I have noted the importance of both international and national discourses that have molded these relationships as well as specific events that have influenced their development.

Particularly within the analysis of the Brazilian class society, I have shown the peculiar characteristics of the Brazilian State, the evolution of the Brazilian elite and its ability to mark the division between private and public, as well as the strategies used by individuals and social movements to contest these boundaries. In our discussion on the formation of the Brazilian State we have necessarily included the categories within Fraser's model: the private/public division; social movements; interest groups; the role of the experts; while structures have arisen which were not explicitly included in Fraser's model:

international influences; the role of the elite within the State; repressive forces; and the Church.

Although important analytical categories, these concepts have been difficult to separate from each other since they exist not as things but rather as interconnected matrixes of relationships based on conflicting ideologies and on a multitude of sometimes opposing discourses and practices. For social movements to be successful, they have had to understand, at least on an intuitive level, how these areas interact within the present context. The ideological tendency of the movement and how the various sectors of the State are interpreted guide the movements actions and discourse, which in turn work to shape counter-interpretations and practices. Implicit in this discussion was an analysis of the discourses provided by Brazilian and Latin American intellectuals or experts who in attempting to decipher the Brazilian reality have contributed to its development.

In general, I have attempted to highlight some of the most significant discourses within the evolution of the Brazilian context. Early intellectuals were more directly influenced by colonialist ideas of European superiority. Sílvio Romero, for instance considered that Brazil was inferior due to the tropical climate and the pervasive mix of Europeans with Amerindians and Africans. His solution was the abolition of slavery, which would halt the influx of Africans to Brazil, and the increase in the immigration of white Europeans to Brazil. Later other scholars attempted to understand Brazil in terms of its Portuguese heritage the personalistic and cordial relationships, and general autonomous attitudes (Holanda 1995). Freyre focused on personal relationships and everyday life, stressing the positive aspects of a population of 'mixed' origins. The ideology of positivism appears to have provided the counter-balance to the lack of impersonal objective organization by offering perfection, order and security, which the military easily assimilated into its nationalistic plans. Dependency and liberation theories attempted, in differing ways, to interpret the Brazilian context within a global scenario of imperialism and asymmetry. Marxist analysis questioned hierarchical relationships internationally and internally and stripping away notions of Brazilian cordiality by naming them exploitive and manipulative. Geopolitical theory countered these discourses by placing the protection of the State structure as the foremost goal of political activity while considering the citizens as potential subversive

elements to the State. Post-modern theories question the very existence of a Brazilian identity and stress fragmentation and plural identities. Throughout Brazilian history, the variations of idioms such as national identity, national security, human rights and citizenship have all provided paradigms by which Brazilians have interpreted the problems and solutions for their context.

Finally the continued interweaving of intercultural interactions internally and in relationship with international bodies has molded the Brazilian context and the context of others. This interplay has been important in the development of the Brazilian position within the global framework, in shaping Brazilian identities, in structuring the State, in defining its institutions and determining the strategies of various interest groups.

I will now turn to the example of the movement against violence against women in Brazil to analyze how this particular movement interacted, shaped and was shaped by these multiple variables.

CHAPTER 4

THE BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AGAINST VIOLENCE

a strategy for empowerment based on legal concepts of equality is of limited value if the dominant sources of legitimacy in society lie elsewhere.

Ann Stewart (1996)

You have to bear in mind that the Brazilian woman is complicated.

Elaine, Brazilian psychologist (1999)

From the previous account of the Brazilian context, various instances of violence against women were explicitly and implicitly noted. Physical and sexual abuse, torture and murder of women were reported as well as institutionalized forms of discrimination and oppression. The genocide of Amerindians, the trafficking and oppression of slaves, the isolation of plantation wives and daughters during colonization, the economic inequalities within the urban centers, the repression of the rural poor, the industrial exploitation of workers, military and police repression, racial and ethnic discrimination, and sex tourism are some examples of practices that could be defined in terms of violence. This list, although partial, indicates that the situation of violence is interwoven with women's position of race, class, political affiliation, nationality and geographic context.

The women's movement against violence, although a recent phenomenon, was not the first or the only struggle by Brazilian women against violence. Frequently the forms of resistance were not limited to discourses, but included cultural and religious practices, silence, trickery, isolation and more radically abortion, homicide and suicide. Historically, Brazilian women's resistance to violence has been dissolved into larger discourses and movements such as those concerning abolition, Amerindian land rights, liberation theology, labor movements, resistance to the military and so on. These movements did not usually deal explicitly with women's concerns, although women formed part of their organizations. What

concerns us here is how women in Brazil began to organize as a women-identified movement around the specific issues of violence and what insights this might bring us in terms of the evolution of gender-based political movements within a postcolonial state and in the understanding of violence within a global framework.

Historical Beginnings

I will now briefly trace the development of the feminist and women's movement(s) in Brazil after the colonial period in order to provide the backstage for the recent organized movement against violence. The feminist movements appear to follow a pattern of political activity and gains followed by political repression and setbacks that coincide with authoritarian regimes, only to experience once again an upsurge with the return to democracy. It becomes evident that democratic structures, while not guaranteeing women's rights, are a prerequisite to the formation of such rights. On the other hand, women would later argue that respect for human rights and democratic channels are not possible without the full participation of women.

Early 20th Century Women's Organizing

From 1850 to 1900 various magazines and journals edited by women stimulated discussion on women's potentials. Topics ranged from women's suffrage, abolition, education, economic independence, divorce, health care, and fashion to literary expositions of women's poetry and prose. Although many of the journals fell back on the argument that a broader education would increase women's capacity to care for their husbands and children, others questioned male authority within the home and defended divorce (Teles 1993; Quartim 1990).

During the early part of the 1900s, with the advent of industrialization, labor rights became a principal organizing issue for Brazilian women workers. Women demanded equal pay for equal work in relation to men, the abolition of the night shift for women and children, a decrease in the workweek and maternal benefits (Teles 1993).

Perhaps the first most influential women's group in the 20th century, organized to gain political rights for women, was the *Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* – FBPF (The Brazilian Federation for Feminine Progress) founded in 1922 by Bertha Lutz. It was made up largely of well-educated, accomplished women with connections both inside Brazil and internationally. The platform of the FBPF was directed towards women's suffrage, education and economic emancipation and was influenced by the feminist movements in Europe and the United States as well as by the authoritarian tradition and hierarchical class structures of the particular Brazilian context. At this time, the economic growth in the urban centers and the introduction of modern communications were directed towards a narrow market of middle-class women. Thus, regional economic variations and the tremendous differences in class hindered the development of a broad national movement (Besse 1996).

Carrie Chapman Catt, a suffragist from the United States, who toured South America in 1922, was impressed with the highly educated and sophisticated women of Brazil and the male senators who toasted to the suffragist women, but she noted that the class inequalities and ideological polarization were causing women to develop conservative agendas (Besse 1996). Within the personalistic social relations of the Brazilian hierarchical society, the economic and political advances available to a few upper- and middle-class women did not challenge male elite dominance. In fact, many men advocated the suffragist movement while they also spoke of the naturalness of women's role. By acquiescing to limited demands that affected only a small percentage of women, male politicians were able to appropriate feminist political discourses and neutralize their power. On the other hand, those women who advocated changes in social relationships, questioned the structure of the family and marriage, or advocated economic equality among women were ostracized and humiliated and often suffered physical or mental breakdowns (Besse 1996).

Concurrently, the magazine *Revista feminina* published from 1914 to 1927 advocated a Catholic brand of feminism and succeeded in attracting a large following. New rights awarded to women were considered necessary insofar as they allowed women to use their intrinsically moral character for the development of the country, family, and church, to redeem politics of its corruption, and promote prosperity (Besse 1996). Rather than question

differences in power between men and women, Catholic feminism focused on the problems associated with the abuses of such power.

Given this scenario of a strong conservative Catholic counter-movement coupled with particular class limitations, the women of the FBPF adopted a non-confrontational and 'peaceful' strategy in order to meet their goals. Their attempts to offset criticism of male politicians or of Catholic organizations by cultivating an image of being respectable ladylike (bourgeois) women and by meeting in exclusive social clubs effectively alienated any working class or Afro-Brazilian women. Also, the fact that most working class women were illiterate made the fight towards suffrage (still based on the literacy requirement) and higher education irrelevant to their situation (Besse 1996).

The 1930 revolution allowed for a period of reorganization in which the women of the FBPF found room to consolidate their proposals. Their efforts resulted in female suffrage in 1932 and a 1934 constitution that allowed for equal rights before the law independent of sex, retention of citizenship to women who married foreigners and the right to pass it on to their children, and a series of guiding principles for labor legislation that included equal pay for equal work, a minimum salary, an eight-hour day, paid holidays, maternity leaves, worker's insurance, the right for women to occupy all public positions and preferential selection of women employees for social assistance programs for women and children (Besse 1996).

However, the November 1937 coup put an abrupt stop to the ambitious plans of the FBPF and to the organization of women workers. Many of their constitutional gains were lost. The 1937 Constitution did not prohibit sexual discrimination or guarantee equal pay for equal work, did not require preferential selection of women in public programs, nor did it offer maternity protection (Besse 1996). President Vargas portrayed himself not as a distant and stern dictator but as a benevolent father figure who, while protecting the weak and the poor, maintained the social hierarchy of upper-class male authority. Material benefits to the urban working class and to women were offered as affectionate and sentimental gifts to elevate their condition but not to empower them (Besse 1996). Protective legislation involving labor laws and maternity benefits were not effectively implemented and therefore, had little effect on the lives of working women. (Alvarez, S.E. 1990).

Women also participated in communist movements and against nazi influence in Brazil prior to the Vargas coup. After the coup, most of the women's movements were diffused into the general resistance and democratic initiatives. In 1945 the *Comitê de Mulheres pela Democracia* (Women's Committee for Democracy) founded in Rio de Janeiro advocated the return to democracy and equal rights for women. However, not one woman participated in the 1946 National Constitutional Assembly and the new constitution resulted in a setback from the 1934 constitution by not referring to equal rights, although it condemned racial discrimination (Teles 1993).

We can note that within the early women's movements in Brazil there were competing interpretations of what feminism should be. Upper-class women considered feminism in terms of the vote and education, which would consolidate their class position. Catholic women espoused a type of essentialist feminism that supported women in their roles as mothers and pillars of the Church and family. Working class women saw the need for gender-specific changes within the struggle for worker's rights. A few women insisted on women's economic and social autonomy and sexual freedom.

These divisions among women enabled their claims to be effectively administrated and neutralized by other interest groups. The Catholic church, for instance, was able to privatize claims by holding on to the natural and intrinsic quality of women as mothers, making feminist claims important only to the degree that they improved upon women's private domestic role. The State, made up of male representatives, was able to neutralize upper-class women's claims by accepting a few of the demands of only a small percentage of the population – of giving lip service to the feminist groups without effectively changing the structures of power. On the other hand, working women's concerns were largely absorbed into the generic workers' rights platform. Finally, as we have seen, those women who espoused autonomy and sexual freedom were not given voice and were interpreted as individual anomalies. The instability of the State and its consequent restructuring obviously hindered the development of long-term goals and required that social movements be prepared to change strategies abruptly.

Women's Organizing from 1950-1980

During the 1950s and early 1960s women participated in local groups which demanded concrete changes in services such as increases in educational opportunities and daycare and in groups which advocated more general objectives such as democracy, world peace and the defense of national resources threatened by multi-nationals. The *Associação das Donas de Casa contra a Carestia* (Association of Housewives against the High Cost of Living) mobilized a large number of women from the entire country (Tabak 1983). Many of these groups were influenced by the Brazilian Communist Party, which promoted workers' rights and organized rural women. The military coup of 1964 guided by anticommunist geopolitics sought to stop the organization of these groups (Teles 1993).

Other types of organizing were also taking place in the 1960s. International programs for assistance and development began in the 1960s to organize women in the popular sectors throughout Latin America. These programs were of a philanthropic nature and supported by governmental, non-governmental and private organizations, many of which were Church-related and supported by foreign funding. Thousands of low-income women's groups were organized throughout the continents with the objective of reinforcing women's traditional roles of mother and housewife (Viezzer 1989). However, most of the clubs did not take part in the discussions concerning the specific policies needed to improve the situation of women, since most of them were dependent on institutions such as the Church and other assistentialist groups, which limited their topics for discussion. Nevertheless, they represented a large potential within the women's movement and, for many women, it was through their participation in the mother's clubs that they received their first taste of political involvement and laid the conditions for creating a feminism with a popular base and direction. The mother's clubs cannot be understood as a homogenous group, but rather as a constellation of groups that vary widely from one another. Bible studies, knitting and crochet circles and handcraft bazaars remained as the primary activities for many clubs while other clubs were the primary instigators of specific social movements within a particular neighborhood, and others moved on to form alliances with national movements (Viezzer 1989).

The military also found it useful to organize women, albeit for a very specific task. In the early 1960s the populist policies of the João Goulart government caused a reaction among the economic elite and the military, who interpreted these policies as a threat to their power. These right-wing forces mobilized thousands of women in the name of traditional feminine values such as morality, motherhood and spiritual piety in order to legitimize a military coup. In 1962 the *Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia* (Women's Campaign for Democracy) was founded by women of the elite classes and the women of military families. They, together with other right-wing groups such as the *Liga da Mulher Democrática* (Democratic Women's League), the *Movimento de Arregimentação Feminina* (Feminine Movement for Regimentation) and the *União Cívica Feminina* (Feminine Civic Union), demonstrated against the Goulart government in the marches of "the Family, with God, for Liberty." which brought thousands of women (500 thousand in São Paulo; 200 thousand in Minas) out into the streets in support of military forces (Alvarez, S.E. 1990; Teles 1993).

Within the military regimes, women were isolated from politics and were educated within a system that supported repressive sexual stereotypes while feminism was interpreted as a 'foreign import' that deteriorated the morals of women (Saffioti 1987). A significant number of women active in social movements were arrested, tortured, raped and killed, children were taken from them and their male partners, husbands, fathers and sons suffered torture and death. Politically inclined women became active in various forms of resistance to the military dictatorship: guerrilla movements, student movements, political parties, and academic groups (Viezzer 1989; Teles 1993). Thus, women organized against the generic violence of military repression and institutionalized violence while gender-directed violence was an issue only in regards to rape and other forms of sexual violence carried out by repressive State forces against women (Teles 1993).

The increasing level of poverty brought on by the policies of the military regime produced situations where women became active in social movements in order to fight for their economic survival. Within a military regime, the 'social' as described by Fraser as the arena for discourse on need interpretation was closed off, as were most institutional channels for political participation. This led to the development of groups organized at the

community level where ties of family, kinship and friendship provided protection and solidarity from oppressive practices.

The grassroots organizations that emerged were not initially oppositional in character but rather functioned as means to make demands based on the needs of a particular community without proposing a critique of the larger political system (Alvarez, S.E. 1990; Jacobi 1987; Cardoso, R. 1983; 1987). Many of these organizations came out of the mother's clubs or were organized by the CEBs or other community organizations. In some cases, women acted individually on behalf of the entire community (Caldeira 1990). Today most scholars agree that these movements were phenomena of crisis politics, that they were not revolutionary in the sense that they attempted to make structural changes in the system, but rather were need-oriented and functioned to meet demands of a particular community or group. Once these needs were met, they often disbanded (Jacobi 1987;Cardoso R. 1983; 1987).

However, these movements were unique in that the overwhelming majority of the participants were women. Women scholars lament that most analyses of urban movements have not taken into account this empirical fact, and consequently offer little analysis of the role of gender or sex within the so-called 'popular' movements (Alvarez, S.E. 1990; Caldeira 1990). Generic categories such as 'inhabitants of the peripheral areas,' the 'popular classes,' 'the people,' 'the poor' used to denote the participants of grassroots community-based movements have effectively obscured the participation of women at the political level (Caldeira 1990). Therefore, the gender blind discourses used to describe and analyze these women's organizations failed to see or describe completely the significance of these groups. By employing the paradigm of 'class struggle' to the exclusion of 'gender politics' the changes in the interpersonal relationships between men and women within the private sphere and the relationship of women to the political were occurring unheeded by most political scientists or activists. Only in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when discussions on gender were in vogue, did women theorists begin to take note of the gender-specific qualities of the new social movements.

Within the patriarchal and social norms, it was considered the responsibility of women to provide for the domestic needs of the family members and the home. The

organization of women for specific changes within their neighborhoods was successful precisely due to the traditional and popular notion that women should fulfill their maternal role. While participating in political parties was considered a 'male' thing, organizing for daycare, health posts, sanitation and low prices was considered an outgrowth of the motherly role (Caldeira 1990; Viezzer 1989). Moreover, participating in the network of kinship, friendship and community relations in order to secure survival needs was considered to be safely within the realm of women's activities (Alvarez, S.E. 1990).

The discourse that women within the popular classes employed to make their demands known was not that of political citizenship, but rather that of 'motherhood' in defense of their culturally ascribed feminine rights to care for their families, children and communities. Alvarez, S.E. (1990) uses the term, "militant motherhood" to describe what became the basis for a large part of the new social movements that directed their activities to the fulfilling of the gender needs of poor and working class women. Not only did this justify their participation, it also gave them a certain legitimacy and symbolic power. These women were supposedly not really doing 'politics,' they were simply doing what was required of them – they were taking care of their families. Who could possibly question this? Neither the State nor the Catholic Church could provide for a rhetorical counter-discourse to discourage women from taking care of their families. Therefore, through the appropriation of what had been a traditionally oppressive discursive tactic, women began entering the social arena under the guise of responsible motherhood. By appropriating and twisting oppositional discourses, women were able to legitimize their concerns and experience a change in their identity as women.

Caldeira (1990) also points out that the justification given and objectives described do not fully explain what was happening within these movements or the underlying motives of the women. For example, in her case study of low-income neighborhoods in Sao Paulo, she discovered that the majority of the women involved in the daycare campaign had no intention of sending their children to daycare. Thus the political aspect of their organizing – demanding daycare – and the justification given – providing services for their children – were in fact secondary dimensions of their organizing. Caldeira's (1990) study indicates that these women participated because of the experiences awarded them in terms of their role and identity as

women. Organizing gave them the possibility of talking together with other women about their problems, it challenged them to find solutions, it provided a change from the life of housework, and gave them a taste of political life. Caldeira (1990) disagrees with the common interpretation of women's participation in social movements as being an outgrowth of their domestic sphere, but rather holds that it was a means to legitimize their participation in the political.

Viezzer's (1989) interviews with women also demonstrate how these women were changing their perspectives and behaviors in relation to men and other women, the world of politics and the Church. Participating in political activities gave them a new sense of accomplishment and purpose which they valued enough to defy their husbands by sneaking off to meetings, or withstanding violent reprisals. By becoming politically active in movements for gender-specific needs, women were also beginning to question male authority at home, the hierarchical structures within the Church, and social norms regarding women's roles. Such changes in attitude are cultural and remain even after political or community groups disband.

Thus, there were multiple variations in the degree to which women entered the political. While some women participated at their community level only for specific campaigns, other women became involved in organizing networks. In the mid-1970s, women went beyond their particular neighborhoods and organized against the cost of living. Initiated by the mother's clubs in the southern part of São Paulo the *Movimento do Custo de Vida* (Cost of Living Movement) later spread throughout Brazil and became a major social movement until 1978 (Viezzer 1989; Saffioti 1987). The Feminine Movement for Amnesty although separate from the Cost of Living Movement also served to mobilize women and fed into the development of the Daycare movement started in 1979, which was able to organize women from various fronts under a common banner (Quartim 1990; Alvarez, S.E. 1990).

While low-income women were organizing within the shantytowns of urban Brazil, the situation of middle-class women was also changing. There was a marked increase in the number of women entering universities during the 1970s and they began to form the kernel for feminist academic thought. Access to foreign feminist literature was primarily restricted to *The Second Sex* by De Beauvoir and *The Feminine Mystic* by Betty Friedan, which acted

as catalysts for feminist thinking. Although expert and academic discourses were influenced by the second wave of feminist movements in Europe and the United States, Brazilian feminist theorizing developed according to the particular political and social context of the Brazilian nation.

Academic production dealing with the condition of Brazilian women tended to focus on socio-historical aspects of discourse. One well-known example of this is *A mulher na sociedade de classe: mito e realidade*, by Heleieth Saffioti (1976) which offers a Marxist analysis of the socio-economic conditions of women throughout Brazilian history and under the modern capitalistic system. Interesting enough, this book was published during the military dictatorship and was financed by a government agency – FAPESP (São Paulo Foundation for the Support of Research). Within the 1960s there were 6 books that were published on the subject of women, 5 of which were academic theses or dissertations, demonstrating that despite government censorship, academia allowed at least a small space for feminist production (Saffioti 1987).

Because the discourses relating to the class struggle were so strong within progressive academic circles, most female intellectuals felt the need to affiliate themselves with Marxism or at least deal with economic aspects of oppression. Feminists, therefore, included in their discourses the issues of inequalities between men and women within the working class, the lack of attention given to women within the labor market, the double workload of women, and so on.

By perceiving the discriminatory practices in regards to job opportunities and pay, women formed feminist and liberation movements in the mid-1970s to struggle for sexual equality in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, reproductive freedom, and against violence against women. Different from the consciousness-raising activities in the early feminist movements in Europe and the United States, Brazilian feminists directed their energies in "outward-oriented" activities. They concentrated on publishing newspapers, magazines and pamphlets and making them available to working class women and women living in the periphery; they collaborated with neighborhood organizations and human rights movements; and organized women's congresses (Sternback et.al. 1992).[1]

[1] See Quartim1990 for a critique of the feminist press during the 1970s.

Most women of the lower and working classes did not define themselves as feminists. However feminist discourses related to such issues as women's autonomy fed into the neighborhood movements as we have cited above. Caldeira (1990) notes, for example, that implicit within the daycare movement and the eventual provision of daycare was the acceptance of certain feminist values: that leaving a child in someone's care and working outside the home was a legitimate activity for women; or that women's political activism could be justified. This very activism also created conditions whereby women could redefine interpersonal relations and modify aspects of their daily lives.

Therefore, in the 1960s and early 1970s women were organizing on various fronts. In a rough analysis we could say that many lower-class women were joining mother's clubs and community organizations; women with leftist political inclinations tended to join resistance movements and academic women began to develop theoretical foundations for Brazilian feminism particularly in reference to class struggles; while conservative women continued to support the military regime. As mentioned above, these areas were not mutually exclusive since many academics involved themselves in political activities and community groups and conservative women were able to harness women from the mother's clubs with the rhetoric of family values.

Exactly what to call organizing women became a topic of discussion. The *feminist movement* referred usually to middle-class professional women or students who were influenced by the feminist movements in Europe and the United States and who identified themselves as feminists; the *women's movement* was used to describe women working within political parties, unions and other organizations; and *women in movement* was used to denote the participation of women in social movements and to describe the process by which women were occupying the new spaces especially within the public sphere (Viezzer 1989, p.78).

However, most analysts agree that the 1975 United Nation's International Year of the Woman provided the symbolic justification as well as strategic means by which women could gain public recognition for their gender-specific concerns (Teles 1993; Viezzer 1989; Quartim 1990). The year marked the increase in conferences and seminars on women's conditions, the publication of women's journals, the founding of information and research centers on women and the organization of new mother's clubs. The United Nations Decade of

the Woman (1975-1985) provided the backdrop for women in Brazil to organize and reflect about their situation and demonstrated the symbolic importance of international decisions and organizations.

The United Nations sponsored *Encontro para o Diagnóstico da Mulher Paulista* (Meeting for the Diagnosis of the Women of São Paulo), held in São Paulo in October of 1975, was one of the first citywide meetings to deal with the particular needs of women. Co-sponsored by the Metropolitan Episcopal Tribunal, this meeting brought together Church-linked associations, neighborhood organizations, unions, political parties and researchers. By using the idiom of Marxist orthodoxy, so prevalent at that time among leftist groups, the meeting focused primarily on the needs of women in relation to work (Alvarez, S.E. 1994). Also in October of 1975 the newspaper *Brasil Mulher* was founded, which focused on women's need for general social changes and targeted working class woman. In 1976 the newspaper *Nós Mulheres*, founded by university students and student movement activists, also targeted poor and working class women (Quartim 1990).

In 1978, the First Congress of Women Industrial Workers (*Primeiro Congresso da Mulher Metalúrgica*) of São Bernardo and Diadema, São Paulo was held. Tensions between union leaders and women marked the first in a series of debates concerning the place women should have in the unions. For the most part, the union leaders considered women to be an "auxiliary force" within the unions while many of the women defended the creation of feminine departments to deal with specific types of female exploitation (Quartim 1990).

The 1979 International Women's Day celebrations held in Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, São Paulo, Campinas and São Carlos symbolized the burgeoning women's movement and also stimulated the organization of a Congress in São Paulo that could unify the differing movements into a more effective political movement. The Congress was highly successful by most reports. The media treated it very positively and gave visibility to the movement, which in turn encouraged women to voice their gender-specific concerns within their particular parties, unions and movements. Many women reported that the Congress was the first time that they were able to publicly talk about issues concerning their everyday life such as sexuality, contraception and housework. Women at the São Paulo Congress produced a document of demands and strategies that prioritized the creation of federal and private

daycare; the provision of equal pay for equal work; and the prevention of high-risk pregnancy. These issues were later accepted at the First National Women's Congress in Rio de Janeiro in 1979, which greatly stimulated and politicized the movement for daycare (Alvarez, S.E. 1990).

The movement for daycare was interesting in that it united groups of women with different political agendas to work towards a common goal, uniting those that organized in the Feminine Movement for Amnesty for political exiles and the Cost of Living Movement. In 1982 the movement won the promise of 830 new daycare centers within the city of São Paulo, which was however, only partially fulfilled (Saffioti 1987; Teles 1993).

The successful organization of the Feminine Movement for Amnesty was influential in forcing the regime to acquiesce to oppositional demands and brought the return of exiled Brazilians. Women who had been active in feminist organizations in Europe infused new ideas and vocabulary into the Brazilian feminist movement. The idea of autonomy, for instance, became a focal point as women became aware of how European women were organizing around such issues as reproductive choice within largely Catholic countries such as France and Italy (Alvarez, S.E. 1994). During this time other interest groups were forming to make particular claims within the general struggle for social justice and an end to military rule. Afro-Brazilian groups and Gay organizations were beginning to articulate their specific needs although they remained leery of the predominantly white and heterosexually oriented feminist movement (Alvarez, S.E. 1994; Cardoso H. 1987).

Perhaps the most important factor within the Brazilian context at this time was that a large number of women were mobilized. Independent of their ideology, women from all social classes were forming groups and attempting to improve their situation. Within this context, movements such as the Cost of Living; the Feminine Movement for Amnesty; and the Daycare movement were able to unify large groups of women in a common cause independent of party affiliation or feminist perspective. These movements demonstrated the political power women could have as an organized group and this was publicly acknowledged through media coverage and by the fact that the women's objectives were to a large degree achieved.

However, differing agendas became apparent as the movement continued and varying interpretations of needs were articulated. As Rosenberg, Campos and Pinto (1985) show, some of the groups considered the struggle for daycare as part of the struggle against discrimination of gender whereby the traditional role of mother could be criticized, while other groups saw the movement as an opportunity to demonstrate the problem of low-income women within the class struggle. Other issues, which divided the groups, such as female sexuality, family planning, abortion and so on were kept below the surface. Therefore, during the military dictatorship, working and living conditions became major issues for women organizing in social movements.

However, with the *política de abertura* that is, the opening up of political freedoms and the reorganization of political parties, women's groups began prioritizing their gender-specific issues and divisions became apparent. Once women began to branch out into other areas not covered by the all-encompassing motherhood banner, problems and tensions began to break out. The successes of women organizing caused leftist groups to take note of the potential they could tap into for their own political agenda, causing many feminists to feel that political-partisan organizations were attempting to manipulate women's groups to serve their own interests (Alvarez, S.E. 1994; Teles 1993; Quartim 1990). Within the peripheral neighborhoods, subjects such as abortion and contraception were difficult to get through Catholic community organizations. Mother's clubs began to question the hold the Church had on their groups and developed autonomous groups that did not identify themselves in regards to reproductive function, preferring to call themselves women's groups, associations, committees or houses (Viezzer 1989).

Therefore, the beginning of the 1980s saw a struggle among Brazilian women to define feminism, or the women's movement. Conflicting discourses within the women's movement defined feminism either negatively as a foreign import from Europe and the United States that did not coincide with Brazilian reality and as an elite type of movement that was valid only for women of the upper-classes. Those groups that criticized the reluctance of leftist movements or Church-related movements to incorporate the needs of women into their agendas espoused the formation of autonomous feminist groups. As a result of these internal conflicts in discourses, some women used the word 'feminist' to refer to

those movements that concerned themselves with the specific problems related to women, regardless of class or race; while 'feminine' was employed to denote those groups whose main concern was general struggles or larger movements for class equality and democracy in which women also participated (Quartim 1990). Feminine and feminist therefore, were understood as two mutually exclusive concepts.

The Second São Paulo Women's Congress in 1980 brought the tensions between the different interest groups to a head. Feminists insisted that the Second Congress continue the discussion of issues that had been raised at the First Congress, particularly the issue of violence against women, while other groups considered the Congress a forum to mobilize women around the general issues of democracy and economic reform. The participation of militant leftist groups and church-linked organizations attempted to direct the agendas away from more gender-specific issues. Many feminists suspected that participants representing 'phantom' organizations strategically stacked some of the discussion groups to lead the talks towards general political agendas while the Catholic organizations were overly represented in discussion groups dealing with birth control and abortion. At one point in the Congress actual physical conflict broke out between groups fighting for the microphone.[2] It became clear that the women's movement was made up of varying and conflicting tendencies. The women's movement, largely due to its success, had become the focus of several interest groups, all with their own agendas and interpretations of what the needs of women should be and how those needs should be fulfilled.

Various types of discourses played a decisive role in the organization or rather the difficulty in organizing women around gender-specific issues during this time. First, the voice of the leftist political parties was very strong during this moment. Within the Brazilian context, the *abertura* (political liberalization) process, which weakened State censorship, granted amnesty to political exiles, and allowed more space for political activity and mobilization, unleashed the organization of political parties. After years under a military regime in which political activism was strictly reduced, the possibility to once more organize along party lines created a surge of renewed and new political parties, although some still

[2] See Alvarez, S.E. 1990; Alvarez, S.E. 1994; Teles 1993; Quartim 1990 for more detailed accounts of the congress.

remained underground. The worker's union organized into the Worker's party (PT – *Partido dos Trabalhadores*) and the PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) reflected the politics of the left and center-left respectively; two communist parties: PCdoB and PCB (Communist Party of Brazil and Brazilian Communist Party) and MR-8 (Revolutionary Movement of October 8) remained underground but active. These parties attempted to control the growing women's movement and draw it under their own banner and, in so doing, they caused divisions (Teles 1993).

Within the universities, progressive academics were using Marxist theory to analyze the problems of economic inequalities and international exploitation. Therefore, feminists had to necessarily deal simultaneously with the problems of gender and class relationship. The socialist feminist position adopted the dialectic-materialist method in which the convergence and interconnection of capitalism and patriarchy would be analyzed within one framework of domination and exploitation.[3] Under this analysis the economic needs of women were considered to be of prime importance.

Another important discursive force that influenced the women's movement was the Catholic Church. Women's groups that had come out of the base communities or the mother's clubs, which had organized around the cost of living and daycare, found that they were never allowed autonomy as women's movements. When they began to discuss issues concerning the relationships between men and women, they were denied access to the community centers or church halls. Although the progressive arm of the Church was instrumental in leading the social movements for political reform, its doctrines in relation to maternity, sexuality and morality have not been modified. Thus, the Catholic Church in Brazil has kept a traditional stance by maintaining the permanent character of matrimony, prohibiting all artificial methods of birth control, condemning abortion as a crime and defining women's needs in terms of their reproductive role (Viezzer 1989).

The birth of new liberation movements also brought new voices to the debate on women's needs. Particularly lesbian and black women had begun to organize once again under the loosening of State authoritarianism and cautiously began articulating their specific concerns.

[3] See Saffioti 1987 for a typology of feminist discourse during this time.

Beyond these internal discourses were also the discourses of international organizations and movements. The international aid programs based on the North-South 'developmental' paradigm targeted low-income women and provided the conditions for a political feminine base which, in many cases, outgrew the discourse of the mother organizations to focus on repressive national and international policies and later to delve into issues relating to feminine sexuality and birth control (Viezzer 1989; Alvarez, S.E. 1994).

As stated above, the 1975 international year of the women provided symbolic impetus that gave justification for a surge in feminist thinking and activity within the Brazilian context. The international non-governmental conferences sponsored by the United Nations during the Decade of the Woman provided forums by which women could share information and develop networks and thus, allowed Brazilian women the opportunity to clarify their ideas before other women and gain exposure to the international context. Although one could question whether the actual conditions lived by the majority of women on the planet have changed significantly due to these forums, they provided a space by which the situation of women was made visible and gave international importance to the women's struggle. As a result, women from Latin America and the Caribbean organized five encounters that were held in different cities throughout Latin America during the 1980s. Although the conferences grew in size and scope over the decade, conflicts between historical feminists and popular movements mirrored the Brazilian context.[4] International feminist discourse while infiltrating the Brazilian arena was also shaped and molded by differing groups in accord with their own objectives. Returning exiles brought ideas of autonomous feminist organizing in Europe and provided women with new vocabulary and paradigms.

However, women's movements in Brazil had different characteristics from those in the United States and Europe. In the United States for instance, the feminism that first emerged from the civil rights movement could initially be divided into two factions: that represented by NOW (National Organization of Women) which worked towards civil rights for women within the current structures of late capitalism and representative democracy, often called 'liberal' feminism and: 'radical' feminism which focused on women's concrete experience as women and often tended towards separatist agendas by understanding male

[4] See Sternback et al 1992 for more detailed information about these conferences

oppression as the universalizing factor of women's experience. Marxist feminism, which suffered a severe setback in the anticommunist McCarthy era of the 1950s, was reduced in the United States to abstract notions of production and reproduction without a significant practical side. Other types of feminisms such as psychoanalytical feminism and cultural feminism developed later (Elshtain 1981).

In Brazil, the blatant differences in economic resources among the population had made class the all-encompassing issue for social and political movements. Problems related to the lack of proper infrastructure, water, and sanitation, and the issue of worker's rights became major organizing issues. In Brazil the Worker's Party, which was supported by the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, led the current towards the opening of a representative democracy. Within this context, the Brazilian feminists necessarily had to deal with the issues of class and incorporate Marxist theory into their analysis. Socialist feminism was the most dominant brand of academic feminism and it was coupled with militant action. During this time, women's movements for concrete services or changes mobilized a large number of women who would not necessarily define themselves as feminists. The return of Brazilian women exiles from Europe brought Brazilian women into contact with other ways of thinking about feminism but for the most part 'radical feminism' in Brazil had only a small following and was short lived (Saffioti 1987). The key issue for intellectual feminists and feminists within the labor movement was how to deal with the problem of incorporating the needs of women within the leftist agenda.

Despite the competing interpretations of women's role within the various spheres of activity (at home, at work, within the church, within the political parties, etc) the issue of women had become, by the beginning of the 1980s, a legitimate discursive topic and area of action. The mass media had picked up on the theme and had begun to present television programs, magazine articles and radio talk shows introducing such topics as sex and abortion that had previously been prohibited. Political parties realized the importance of including some reference to women within their platforms (Quartim 1990). Although women themselves were divided on which women's needs should be prioritized, how they should be interpreted or how the in-order-to chain should advance, they were at least successful in making these questions heard.

The Brazilian Women's Movement against Violence: Strategies of the 1980s

It was out of this context of growing mobilization that the recent Brazilian women's movement against violence began. I have attempted to show that although it coincided with other movements around the world, the recent women's movement within Brazil was based on its own particular context. The oppositional forces to the military government had used human rights as the paradigmatic idiom to gain national as well as international support in their repudiation of the repressive policies and practices imposed by the regime. Within this context, violence was defined as State oppression and authoritarianism. However, with the breakdown of military power, other issues rose to the public arena, particularly those of urban industrial workers through the successful organization of the Worker's Party. The basic tension within the women's movements was whether women should be engaged in general struggles for democracy and equality or for gender-specific issues.

SOS-Mulher – Women's Autonomy

Many women who had been involved in party politics did not want to give up their involvement in the class struggle and hypothesized that a more egalitarian distribution of wealth within Brazil would modify and improve the situation of women as well. In general, the political parties of the left had a certain reluctance to include women's issues in their platform, using the excuse that feminism was an issue only for elite women or that it would divide the party. Groups that identified themselves as feminist had focused on publishing articles and journals and had organized with other women's groups in the general struggles for daycare, amnesty and re-democratization. However, as tensions spilled over in the 2nd Women's Congress, the need to work on particular gender-related issues was identified by many women as a necessary strategy for the development of a feminist agenda. Violence against women would be the issue that would consolidate this proposal and it would be defined initially as the murder of wives or women partners and the exoneration of the accused through the 'honor defense.'

Violence in the private sphere had previously been categorized as a class issue by both the right and the left. A blatantly classist perspective holds that men who lack formal education or cultural refinement are more inclined to use violence against their partners, while a leftist argument could interpret domestic violence as being a result of male frustration and anxiety brought on by financial pressures or exploitive working conditions.

However, the practice of absolving wife-murderers has a strong cultural basis which goes back to the penal code of 1890 that established that no one could be considered criminal when found in a "state of complete perturbation" during the act of the crime. This provided the legal justification to absolve the so-called "crimes of passion" (Ribeiro, S.N. 1975). Thus, men who found or suspected their wives of adultery could be said to experience a state of "momentary insanity" due to the strong emotions involved, thereby committing a crime that they had not previously intended (America's Watch 1991). This defense was quite successful for a period of about 50 years, but the third Penal Code weakened this defense through its formulation, which explicitly noted that such emotions do not eliminate responsibility. From this impasse, defense attorneys developed the 'legitimate defense of honor' that places the accused as victim of imminent aggression against his honor (America's Watch 1991).

The largely accepted double standard of sexuality in Brazil, which tolerates or almost expects extra-marital relationships for men but condemns them for women, produced the conditions whereby the murder of a woman and her lover was condoned on the basis of honor. The honor defense was expanded to include justification for the murder of wives or even girlfriends *suspect* of adultery. Correa (1983) reveals that between 1950 and 1960 in the city of Campinas, São Paulo the legitimate defense of honor was used in the majority of battering and murder cases of men against their female partners. The crux of the honor defense for feminists has been that although it has no real basis in law, and although higher courts have repeatedly overturned acquittals based on the honor defense, the prevailing social norms have allowed for its continuance and success.[5]

As described above, the time was ripe for political action and the highly publicized murder of women by their partners in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro were the catalytic events which initiated the women's movement against violence in Brazil and brought it out as

[5] See America's Watch 1991 for examples of such cases.

a topic for public discussion. The fact that these women came from the middle- and upper-classes refuted any discursive argument basing these murders on class conditions. Rather, these murders were interpreted by feminists as gender-related crimes and the consequent honor defense as a culturally accepted norm for oppressing women, thereby positioning violence against women as a social problem (União 1995).

In Belo Horizonte in the state of Minas Gerais the Center in Defense of Women's Rights had previously organized against the honor defense. In August of 1980, the women's movement mobilized against the murder of two women from Minas Gerais by their husbands. The same occurred in Rio de Janeiro in which violence against women was a topic of discussion in the 1979 National Women's Encounter, after which a commission on violence was created and remained during 1979 and 1980 primarily a closed reflection group. However, after the murder of one of the members by her husband, the group manifested against the crime and gained access to the press. The Centers in Rio de Janeiro and the Belo Horizonte were organized with the objectives of responding politically to the murder of women by their partners and of assisting women in situations of violence (Gregori 1993).

However, Sao Paulo was the place where the major initiatives against violence would take place. After the fiasco of the Second Women's Congress in São Paulo, the feminist groups at the Congress decided to hold another encounter that same year in Valinhos, São Paulo to develop a new feminist political strategy based on the principal of autonomy. At this encounter, women decided to create a commission with representatives of all the feminist groups in São Paulo that would work on a number of priorities, one of which was violence against women (Gregori 1993; Teles 1993; Quartim 1990). The commission discussed the issue of violence against women with the purpose of defining a form of direct gender-specific practice that would be publicly visible. It was from this commission that *SOS-Mulher* in São Paulo was born.

The members of the commission felt a certain urgency to create something visible that would bring the issue of violence against women to the social arena. Women felt it was important to give visibility to gender-specific violence and thereby demonstrate that there existed other forms of oppression beyond the State. The issue of institutionalized violence of the State had been and continued to be an important organizing issue, but feminists, in

bringing the issue of violence against women to the public arena, were actually demonstrating that gender-specific forms of violence existed and had been historically hidden (Barsted 1994b).

Activists were quick to come up with new slogans and strategies for gaining public attention and repudiating violent relationships: *Quem ama não mata* (Who loves doesn't kill); *O silêncio é cúmplice da violência* (Silence is accomplice to violence). Manifestations were made to publicize the opening of the *SOS-Mulher* in São Paulo in which the use of theatrical performances of a kangaroo court representing the murder trial of two women and the general tone of protest served to stimulate indignation and instill a feeling of cohesion among women (Gregori 1992). In 1980, October 10th was named the National Day of Struggle against Violence against Women and continues to be remembered.

Although most centers remained open only from 1981 to 1983, the *SOS-Mulhers* were successful in bringing the theme of violence against women to the public arena where the debate of domestic violence and the honor defense could be discussed. The importance of organizing against the murders of women was to condemn not only the murders but also the use of the honor defense and the impunity allowed the aggressors by the jury. In the latter instance, the jury, representing the society at large, accepted the argument that if a woman exercised independence or if she was only *suspect* of exercising independence she could be considered guilty of blemishing the honor of her family or the honor of her partner and therefore, deserve (often fatal) retaliation. That the jury, lawyer and judge accepted or used such a defense demonstrated that sexist ideas were deeply entrenched in the culture and legitimized by the judicial arm of the State. For the feminists, the importance of demonstrating against these crimes was not only to demand the punishment of the particular men involved but also to change public opinion concerning the murder of women by men and the role of women in general. The fact that the women murdered were not from the lower class provided evidence that this was a problem that ran across class lines.

Based on the idea that murder was the ultimate end of an escalating scale of violence between partners, the *SOS-Mulher* also directed its services to battered women. Besides offering empirical proof of the problem, the *SOS-Mulher* centers provided services to these women and despite the inadequacies of these services, the centers were able to identify a

number of problem areas in relation to violence against women within the Brazilian context, one of these being the police stations (Gregori 1992).

Therefore, women interested in autonomous gender-specific political action were successful in making wife-murder an issue of public concern. Later, the concept of violence expanded to include the situation of battered women (*mulheres espancadas*) and sexual violence. Although several groups also began to work against sexual harassment within the workplace and several public demonstrations were organized against factories or agencies that discriminated against women in this way, the issue of murders remained the major issue of articulation.[6]

SOS-Mulher centers began to spring up nationwide and the objectives and success of each *SOS- Mulher* varied according to each state. Although violence had already been a topic within the feminist discourse for some time, *SOS-Mulher* was the first attempt by feminists to work directly with women, victims of violence. Considering themselves militants in the feminist struggle, the organizers of these centers volunteered their services and attempted to create a non-hierarchical form of organization. Since *SOS-Mulher* was the first organization of its type in Brazil and since there was no previous research done on the potential demand of such a service, the women based their actions and objectives on their personal experiences as women and on their particular brand of feminist ideology. They hoped to support victims through an educative and consciousness-raising process in which they would attempt to *de-sacralize* marriage and question the role of women in their relationship to men (Gregori 1993).

However, the *SOS-Mulher* served other functions and also provided a space for the women volunteers to discuss their agendas. Filled with the energy of creating something new, of being part of a larger movement, many of the original founders of *SOS-Mulher* dedicated themselves to the project full-time and due to their constant approximation with other women in the group, affectionate ties were formed. Participation in the *SOS-Mulher* in São Paulo produced more than an entity which served women who suffered violence, it also created an opportunity for many of the participants to experience closeness with other women, to affirm themselves as sexual beings and to develop a concept of "feminist culture" (Pontes 1985 cited

[6] See União 1995 for a listing of demonstrations in 1985.

in Gregori 1993). In a country where feminist practice had previously focused on such practical matters as daycare, amnesty for exiled people, and the cost of living, this type of feminism offered a new perspective and experience. Therefore, the *SOS-Mulher* also served the needs of the volunteers by bringing women together to experience other forms of female relationship. Later, others would critique the volunteers for their inability to focus on the needs of the women they assisted.

For some of the feminists who had been political prisoners, working with *SOS-Mulher* was at times a very disconcerting experience. Suddenly they found themselves having to meet and negotiate with the police concerning a particular case when just a few years ago they were themselves victims of police abuses (Vinagre Silva 1992). It seems quite amazing that they volunteered for such activities at all! Interestingly enough, these women could attest – on a very personal level – to the developing concept of violence against women. Having fought personally against the gender-specific violence of the State, these women were active in providing evidence that violence against women could be defined beyond State repression, and include the area of private interpersonal relationships between men and women. Moreover, the overtly discriminatory manner in which the police assisted women who came to the police stations demonstrates the link between repressive forces and personal violence. Police often insinuated that the woman was responsible for the violence, attempted to trivialize her experience, failed to file her report, or performed other discriminatory practices. As members of the male sex and as representatives of repressive forces, their discourse carried a legitimacy that discouraged women from seeking their assistance (Vinagre Silva 1992).

The significance of *SOS-Mulher* and Defense Centers for Women rested primarily in their provision of concrete evidence of the existence of violence within intimate relationships. Basing their activities initially on the repudiation of wife-murders and the subsequent utilization of the honor defense to absolve the murderer, they expanded the concept of violence to include interpersonal aggression. By having direct contact with women, they were also able to expand the in-order-to chain, citing the need for improved police assistance, low-cost legal services and shelters as necessary provisions for women to free themselves of violent relationships.

Infiltrating the State

The organizing of the *SOS-Mulher* centers provided evidence of the need for gender-specific policies and fueled the initiatives of other feminists working within the State. Within the democratization process, women activists had the opportunity to participate in the restructuring of the State along gender, class and race lines at the federal, state and municipal level. The *abertura* process created a space by which certain concerns could be developed into public policy in a more direct and forthright manner than under 'normal' stable conditions.

State Councils

Feminists working within the political parties armed with the discourse of the mounting women's movements were able to push through some major initiatives, one of which was the creation of the municipal and state Councils on the Feminine Condition and the National Council on Women's Rights.

During the 1982 electoral campaign, a group of feminists affiliated with the *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasiliero* (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) worked towards the creation of a state entity that would combat discrimination against women. When the governor from this party was elected, he installed on April 4, 1983 the *Conselho Estadual de Condição Feminina* (State Council on the Feminine Condition) in São Paulo. Other states such as Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul and Mato Grosso do Sul later followed suit and formed state councils. Although the exact duties and powers given to each council vary from state to state, the initial vision was to create an organism that would consolidate the concerns of women and articulate feminist demands to the other branches of the government, acting within the power of consultant rather than as a ministry with deliberative power. However, it was the council in São Paulo that acted as model and as reference in terms of feminist institutional occupation at the state level (Vinagre Silva 1992).

The *Conselho Estadual da Condição Feminina de São Paulo* (the Sao Paulo State Council of the Feminine Condition) was able to initiate the following projects:

> Legal Assistance and Referral for Women. The Center of Juridical Orientation and Referral – *COJE* was instituted in 1985 with the Secretary of Justice and the Deputy Attorney's Office of the State to provide legal assistance for women. It was initially formed by women lawyers from the Deputy Attorney's office who voluntarily gave a few hours a week. In 1986, *COJE* was institutionalized as part of the structure of the Deputy Attorney's office. The State Council subsequently lost its representation on the composition of the team and the organization lost its connection to the women's movement (Barsted 1994b).
> Women's Shelter. With the Secretary of Social Welfare the first shelter *Centro de Convivencia de Mulhers Vitimas de Violence – COMVIDA* (Cohabitation Center for Women Victims of Violence) was inaugurated in 1986 as a shelter where women and children in situations of 'high risk' could remain for a period of three months. During this period legal aid, medical services and employment guidance were provided for the women (Azevedo 1987). In 1989 the shelter was closed due to problems in administration, in the organization of volunteers and among the women who lived together in the shelter. It was opened again in 1992 as part of the structure of the Secretary for Public Security (INCARTE 1997).
> Women's Police Stations. By working with the Secretary of Public Security, the *Delegacias de Polícia em Defesa da Mulher* (Police Station in Defense of the Woman) were created in August 1985. These women's police stations were designed to be staffed entirely by women and serve exclusively women and children in order that women would not suffer discrimination in making criminal charges against their male partners.

Although the council in São Paulo was by far the most active of state councils, other states also followed the São Paulo lead and installed state entities to work on issues related to women. These entities were by no means uniform in their political objectives, organization structure or name (*assesoria*, coordination, or council). For instance, the State Council on Women's Rights of Rio de Janeiro created in 1987 and implanted in 1988 acted as a consulting entity and dedicated a good deal of its efforts to police training. In 1988 it developed a one-week course on feminist issues for 300 new police detectives at the Civil Police academy. Women on the councils also created the agency *Pro-Mulher* to compliment the work of the women's police stations with psychologists, social workers and attorneys and collaborated with non-governmental agencies in dealing with violence against women (Barsted 1994b). On the other hand, the installation of councils in Belo Horizonte and Mato

Grosso do Sul was considered by many feminists as merely political strategies by conservative state-governments to co-opt feminist initiatives. (Alvarez, S.E. 1990; personal communication, Dr. Anna Maria Gomez, member of the *Conselho Estadual dos Direitos da Mulher MS* (State Council of Women's Rights in Mato Grosso, 1997).

Women's Police Stations

Of the initiatives created by the councils the most successful and pioneering was the Women's Police Stations. Preliminary steps in this direction had already been articulated by the work of *SOS-Mulher*. In Minas Gerais a study (funded by the Ford Foundation) by the Center for the Defense of Women's Rights reported that violent crimes against women were not being investigated because the police trivialized the crime, neglected to follow correct procedures in filing reports, or omitted crucial information (America's Watch 1991). Glaring instances of mistreatment and discrimination by the police (flirting with the victim; persuading the woman not to file a report; flatly refusing to proceed with the case; etc.) produced a situation in which women felt as if they were being violated twice – once by their partner and once by the police (Vinagre Silva 1992). The tendency by the police to trivialize the violence was also a reflection of societal attitudes evident in such popular sayings as: "In a fight between man and woman, one shouldn't even interfere with a spoon"(*em briga de homem e mulher, não se mete a colher*) or "dirty laundry should be washed at home" (*roupa suja se lava em casa*.).

Therefore, within a context of historical abuses by the police and overtly discriminatory attitudes particularly in relationship to women, the council in Sao Paulo supported by the national council working closely with the secretary of public safety was able to push through a project which resulted in state recognition of this gender-specific aspect of crime, the *Delegacias Especializadas de Atendimento às Mulheres (DEAMs)* (Police Stations Specialized in Assisting Women.) or also commonly known as *As Delegacias de Polícia em Defesa da Mulher* (Police Stations in Defense of Women).

Upon their installation it was not clear exactly how the public would receive the delegacias. Rosemary Corrêa, who was called to head the first police station in São Paulo, remembers:

> I had the same perspective that a lot of my colleagues still have of the *delegacias*. I thought that it would end my career, that it would be just a social work job, that the problems were unsolvable, that nobody was going to be able to resolve anything and that I was really going to go into ostracism (Delegacia 1986).

However, the *delegacias* were a tremendous popular success and Chief Rosemary Corrêa suddenly became a popular political figure. A Gallup poll conducted in the region of greater São Paulo in 1986 showed that 86% of the people polled believed that violence against women existed and that it constituted a grave problem. In cases of violence against women, 90% thought that the woman should go to the *delegacia* and 68% thought that the *delegacias* had helped to diminish the cases of violence (Feridas1986). In fact, Rosemary Corrêa, far from going into ostracism, moved on to host a radio program in which public complaints were made and discussed, served as Secretary of the Family and Child of São Paulo and later became a State Congresswoman.

Politicians soon started promising the installation of *delegacias* should they get elected. The expansion of women's police stations nationwide dedicated to recognizing crimes of violence against women supported the feminist stand that violence against women in the private sphere should be considered a social/criminal issue that warrants police action. The importance of the *delegacias* is that they represent, at least on the symbolic level, State recognition of the criminality of gender-specific violence. The installation of the *delegacias* was strategically a very significant move because it suddenly turned a repressive arm of the State into a potential ally of the feminist movement. In one swift move, feminists were able to provide police services to women within an atmosphere that encouraged them to report the crimes; obligate the State to acknowledge violence against women as criminal activity; provide easily accessible data on violence against women; change the internal organization of the precinct structure, in which violence against women would become a specialized area of police surveillance; gather public support for the movement against violence against women.

National Council

In 1985 the *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (National Council of Women's Rights) was installed under President Sarney who fulfilled the promise of the late president Tancredo Neves (Saffioti 1987). The National council focused its attention on education, health, violence and work and promoted research and publications of material in these areas. In August of 1985, in the first meeting of the National Council, the women chose the topic of violence against women as priority. In October of 1985, the National Council unleashed a national weeklong campaign against male violence against women (Saffioti 1987). Besides dealing with violence within the 'private' sphere, the Council also dealt with institutionalized violence and overt discrimination against women within the workplace. In terms of Agrarian Reform, the Council published a study on violence against women in the rural areas and denounced forms of sexual harassment. However, the work against interpersonal violence in the private sphere was the topic that received the most public attention while the other areas remained, for the most part, in the background (Barsted 1994b).

During the writing of the new constitution, the National Council worked to develop awareness and support for changes in the constitution concerning violence against women. Three videos were developed and shown on television, radio announcements were made and advertisements in magazines, newspapers and billboards repudiating violence in the private sphere were publicized. In this way, the Council worked to support and provide media exposure for those issues that women's groups found most important (Barsted 1994b). The National Council of Women's Rights organized a collection of proposals for the National Encounter on Women and the Constitution held in Brasilia in August of 1986. During the *Constituinte* (Constitutional Assembly) the National Council was the primary *porta voz* for the needs of women and articulated these demands to the legislature, actively lobbying to include provisions within the constitution that would secure rights for women.

The Constitutional Assembly

Between 1986 and 1988 new feminist groups, women's organizations and other popular movements became active in the writing of the new Brazilian constitution. The discourse continued to be that of human rights and many encounters and conferences were held to develop proposals and discuss the constitution

The actual number of women legislative representatives who voted on the constitution was small – a total of 26 women representing 5.7% of the House. Interestingly enough, the more progressive southern and southeastern regions where feminism was much more of an active force elected very few women to the legislature. In fact, most of the women elected came from the conservative northeastern and northern regions of the country where their clout was gained through the traditional clientelistic associations of family, wealth, access to the means of communication and so on. However, despite their conservative agendas and differing political platforms, the women representatives were able to organize as a group, name themselves the *bancada feminina* (feminine block) and present amendments that included almost all of the claims made by feminist and women's movements (Pinto 1994).

In her analysis of the feminist movement within representative democracy in Brazil, Pinto (1994) gives three possible reasons for this outcome. One is that popular women's movements were organized, presented proposals and pressured the Constitutional assembly; second, the National Council of Women's Rights was also mobilizing women, presenting proposals and lobbying representatives; and third, the overwhelmingly male presence of the House could have motivated the women representatives to seek solidarity with each other and form an identity as the feminine block. Thus, their positioning within a male dominated State structure in which they most probably suffered discrimination as women impelled them to find strength as a group and probably made them more susceptible to the influences of the discourses of other women at the grassroots level and within the State structures although most of them were not part of these women-defined movements.

Of the list of recommendations drafted for the National Assembly, women secured the following items: promotion of the welfare of all without prejudice to origin, race, sex, color, age or other forms of discrimination (Art 3 – IV); equal rights and responsibilities with men

(Art. 5 – I); maternity as well as paternity leave (Art 7 XVIII; XIX); improved prison conditions (Art. 5 – L); incentives to protect the work market for women (Art. 7 – XX); work benefits for domestic workers (Art 7 XXXIV); prohibition of work discrimination or salary differences on the bases of sex, age, color or civil status (Art. 7 – XXX); the right to family planning and prohibition of coercive anti-reproductive methods (Art. 226 paragraph 5); severe punishment for the abuse, violence against and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (Art. 227 paragraph 4); and finally the inclusion within the constitution that the State should create mechanisms to hinder violence within the family (Art 226 paragraph 226).

The attempt to decriminalize abortion was not successful and currently abortion is illegal in Brazil except for cases of rape or when pregnancy poses a health risk to the mother. Despite the failure of women to legalize abortion, the struggle for its inclusion into the constitution was remarkable given the conservative Catholic context. Abortion was articulated as a matter of women's safety and 'forced reproduction' given that Brazil is a world leader in illegal abortions. The interactive work of feminists inside and outside of the State made it possible for women to secure their gains and block retrogressive tendencies in regards to reproductive rights (Alvarez, S.E. 1994).

Thus, unlike the previous constitutional assembly in 1946, women in 1988 were mobilized and prepared to present their causes. After over 10 years of working on and discussing gender issues, women were prepared to articulate numerous claims and justifications. They had gained visibility and organizing experience and were represented at several levels: within the unions, within the neighborhood movements, as autonomous groups; within the academy; and within the State and National councils. Violence against women had become a principal organizing issue and topic of public debate that had passed through a metamorphosis of definitions, which identified a number of contexts, inside and outside the private sphere. Thus, issues such as the working status of domestic workers, rural conditions, abortion, prison conditions, sterilization, sex tourism and racism were enveloped in the concept of violence against women and articles were included within the constitution which made reference to these types of violence.

Developing Theory: The Role of the Academic Experts

In terms of publications, Brazilian women had begun to write about and name the violence that was occurring within the private sphere. The major focus of most publications was to denounce the violence by presenting proof of its existence and provide a feminist perspective by placing the violence within the framework of female oppression.

Various books and pamphlets were published such as *A violência doméstica* (Oliveira, Barsted & Paiva 1984) which focused in on the problem of domestic violence against women, providing practical orientation. The book delineates sexist attitudes that oppress women and explains the rights and resources women have at their disposal. This book presents a clear 'consciousness raising' discourse and constructs domestic violence as an escalating scale of aggressions which can potentially terminate in homicide.

The study *Um retrato da violência contra a mulher: 2038 boletins de ocorrência* (CECF & SEADE 1987) analyzes the first cases registered at the *delegacia* in the city of São Paulo between August of 1985 and December of 1985. The book provides statistical analysis of various characteristics of the people involved in interpersonal violence. Marisa Corrêa in *Os crimes da paixão* (1981) takes a critical look at the honor defense and in *Morte na Familia* (1983) makes an analysis of legal cases to demonstrate how the honor defense had been used to justify wife-murders.

Two examples of books which touched on feminine sexuality using the methodology of questionnaires, letters and interviews with Brazilian men and women are *Sexualidade da mulher brasileira: corpo e classe social no Brasil*, by Rose Marie Muraro (1983) and *De Mariazinha a Maria* by Marta Suplicy (1985). Once again, the issue of class was tied to that of sexuality in both books; however, unlike much of the feminist literature, which evaded the question of female sexuality, these two books dealt with it in a forthright manner. Written outside of the university setting, these books stimulated discussion on the topic of feminine sexuality and provided background information for later discussions on sexual abuse.

Mulheres espancadas, a violência denunciada (Azevedo 1985) provided a decidedly feminist analysis of violence against women based on an analysis of sexist attitudes within western philosophy and the statistical analysis of police records at a police station in São

Paulo. Azevedo proposes a framework for explaining family violence by locating it within the general context of "capitalistic patriarchy." Conditioning factors found within this context are: concrete forms of the socio-economic and political regime; discriminatory practices against women; the *machista* or sexist ideology; differentiated education and socialization; and individual factors. Precipitating factors included are alcohol, other drugs and situations of stress. Although allowing for "multiple determinations" in respect to interpersonal violence, Azevedo clearly places domestic violence against women within the context of sexual inequalities that are perpetuated within the various structures and institutions of society (State, family, educational institutions, economic structures, etc.), while allowing space, albeit a small niche, for individual psychological characteristics and behaviors. Using information from the cases registered in 1981 at the police districts of the city of São Paulo, Azevedo goes on to provide a profile of the victim and the aggressor, attempting in this way to break through some of the myths that had revolved around this issue. For instance, she attempts to dissipate the theory that male violence against women in the private sphere is a result of poverty or exploitation. By referring to the data she concludes that domestic violence occurs within all social classes and is not confined to families with lower incomes, rather the aggressor could be a "citizen of good standing" with no apparent "criminal" characteristics.

Azevedo's use of the word "*espancadas*" in describing the women conjures up the harsh nature of the violence and indeed her book gives examples of extreme cases of domestic violence. The strategy of interspersing her discourse with popular sayings and songs that could be used to reinforce sexist attitudes exemplifies how sexual inequalities had become part of the cultural common sense. She offsets this by providing the example of popular songs which tell of women's strength and courage; thus, providing another form of emotional appeal and offering alternative patterns of thinking about women already apparent within the culture. Overall, the general tone of the book is that of repudiating violence against women and its underlying objective is to bring the topic of interpersonal violence up to public scrutiny while providing an analysis based on gender inequality.

Although certainly an important book within the development of the Brazilian women's movement against violence, it has come under fire for its sensationalistic style and

its tendency to label women as victims rather than subjects. Gregori (1993) argues that Azevedo has attempted to put all of the responsibility for acts of violence on men while characterizing women as passive victims, mystified by sexist ideology. Both Azevedo and Oliveira's books are criticized for attempting to develop a profile of the violent relationship and of the people involved. Gregori argues that simple categorizations of aggressor or victim could not possibly provide for all of the nuances and diversity that is found within violent relationships.

However, an article by Chaui published in 1985 has maintained its relevance for women. Chaui's definition of violence has been consistently cited by other authors (Azevedo 1985; CECF & SEADE 1987; Pavez 1997) and adopted as part of the organizational philosophy of numerous centers (*Casa* Eliane Grammont; *Casa* de Apoio Viva Maria) engaged in work concerning women and violence. Chaui defines violence as follows:

> We understand violence as a realization determined by relations of force, in terms of social class as well as in interpersonal terms. Instead of regarding violence as a violation and transgression of norms, authorizations, and laws, we prefer to consider it under two other angles. First it is a conversion of difference and asymmetry into a hierarchical relationship of inequality with ends of domination, of exploitation and of oppression; that is to say, a conversion of differences into inequalities and an inequality into a relation between superior and inferior. Secondly, it is an action, which treats a human being not as a subject but as a thing. This is characterized by inertia, by passivity and by silence in the way that when an activity and the speech of another are impeded or annulled, there is violence (although this would be a particular realization of such). Force desires the death or immediate suppression of the other. Violence desires the consented subjection or suppression mediated by the will and by the action of the dominated party, in such a way that the loss of autonomy is not received or recognized, but submerged in a heteronym that is not perceived as such. In other words, the perfect violence is that which results in alienation, which is the identification of the will and action of someone with the contrary will and action of those who dominate. Under this aspect, we can talk of a violent society and of a violent State. However a violent power is not possible as long as we understand power as an exercise and effective acknowledgement of rights and of political practice. Power does not exclude a struggle, violence does (Chauí, 1985, p. 35).

This definition of violence was developed within a context of State repression and organized resistance. It was clear to Chauí that mere acts of aggression or even armed

resistance would have to be understood within a context of institutionalized State violence. To define violence as physical assault or battery would limit it to the notion of transgressing State controlled laws of order. Therefore, it was necessary to come up with a definition of violence that would include acts of repression by the State not customarily defined as violence, such as censorship, restriction of civil rights and ideological manipulation, while at the same time comprehend acts of resistance, which according to the law, would be considered aggressive, criminal acts, as means to counteract violence. The definition would have to deal not only with State repression but also include a socialist-feminist perspective, framing violence in terms of class and male domination.

Autonomous Movements and New Definitions of Violence

From the above account, the movement against violence could be traced according to the following seemingly linear sequence: The emergence of *SOS-Mulher* Centers, which succeeded in turning violence against women into an important issue within the women's movements and provided justification for the need for State Councils on the Feminine Condition; which in turn prioritized violence against women and pressed for the installation of Women's police stations; whose very success demonstrated the depth of the problem of violence against women and greatly increased public discussion and awareness of the issue; which was reinforced by women within the National Councils who carried out national campaigns against violence and brought the issue to the Constitutional Assembly. However, there were other concurrent autonomous movements that also included violence on their agendas and influenced and were influenced by the "official State-related" strain of the movement. These other groups, by working on the local and national level, brought up claims that expanded the concept of violence against women.

During the 1980s Afro-Brazilian women, frustrated by the agenda of the male-dominated Afro-Brazilian movement and the inadequacies of the white-dominated feminist movement, founded autonomous groups to deal with the issues of racism and sexism. Between 1984 and 1994, fifty new women's organizations were founded that focused on the issue of race (*Veja* 1994 cited in Geledés 1995). The Black Feminist *Coletivo de Mulheres*

Negras da Baixada Santista (Black Women's Collective of Baixada Santitsta) and *Geledés – Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Black Women's Institute) are two examples of these groups. The groups had the effect of expanding the concept of violence to include: the use of 'good appearance' as a requisite for employment; the negative portrayal of black women in the media and in educational books; mass sterilization of black women, primarily in the north and northeastern regions of Brazil; and domestic and sexual violence against women (Geledés 1995 p. 11). Afro-Brazilian women were perhaps the first to question the paradigm of 'male aggressor versus female victim' employed to explain the phenomena of violence against women by arguing that such a paradigm could not incorporate all of the numerous forms of violence Afro-Brazilian women experienced (Geledés1995).

The inclusion of two Afro-Brazilian women in the State Council on the Feminine Condition in São Paulo gave the needed effect of promoting debates regarding racial oppression and how these concerns could be integrated into the actions of the council. The organization of the Commission on Black Women of the Council in São Paulo focused on producing studies that focused on the conditions of Afro-Brazilian women. Later, the formation of the National Council on Women's Rights made possible the structuring of the National Coordination of the Program on Black Women in 1988 (Geledés 1995). During the Constitutional Assembly, black women's organizations lobbied for amendments that would respond to the needs of Afro-Brazilian women, such as labor rights for domestic workers, the prohibition of discriminatory practices based on race or sex, and the prohibition of coercive forms of sterilization (Geledés 1995).

Women in the popular movement, especially those pertaining to the mother's clubs, also began to form autonomous groups beyond the confines of the Church or other organizations. In 1982, *Rede da Mulher* (Women's Network) was founded to provide a connection between popular women's groups in São Paulo and later expanded to include groups nationwide. It has been supported by Church and human rights organizations in Europe and industries within Brazil. The principle objectives of the *Rede* have been to stimulate the growth of groups, inform them of new national and international developments, provide a forum for exchange of information between groups, and organize an effective lobby. Particularly during the Constitutional Assembly, the *Rede* was active in lobbying and

informing women's groups about the process. Its areas of concentration have been: Human Rights, Nondiscriminatory Education, Gender and Leadership, and Gender and Sustainable Development Movements. In terms of violence, the *Rede* has worked within the paradigm of human rights and because of its popular base it has considered violence not only in interpersonal terms such as physical or sexual violence but also within a wider framework of poverty, inequalities, unemployment or exploitation, and lack of reproductive choice (personal communication Denise Carreira Soares, *Rede Mulher de Educação*; Member of the National Council on Women's Rights 1997).

The Women's Popular Movement of Mato Grosso do Sul is an example of an organization that outgrew its Church-based origins and developed into an autonomous group. In the early 1980s the Social Ministry of the Catholic Church began to organize poor women of the urban periphery to take part in activities traditionally delegated to women, such as crocheting, knitting and bible circles. Eventually these organizations, as they had in São Paulo and other regions of Brazil, evolved into politically motivated groups that articulated the needs of their particular neighborhood for water and electricity. In 1984, one of the women's groups in Três Lagoas, due to its proximity, began to enter into dialogue with some of the women's groups in São Paulo who had already begun working on issues related specifically to women. Influenced by these contacts, the women's groups in Mato Grosso do Sul began to reflect on women's health and sexuality. The First Encounter of popular women's groups was organized in 1985 and marked the creation of the Women's Popular Movement of Mato Grosso do Sul (MPM) and its break with the Catholic Ministry. From this time on, the women of the MPM have organized yearly encounters to decide their agenda and their theme for struggle for the following year. Health became the first organizing issue and by sending out questionnaires to every woman's group, the MPM was able to develop research on the condition of women's health within the state. Since this time they have worked in the area of mass sterilization and inspection of health service organizations for women. Issues of sterilization emerged after they discovered that, of their sample, 69% of rural women and 51% of urban women from 20-40 had been sterilized. In 1992, the issue of affection and sexuality was chosen as the organizing issue of the year, while in 1993, violence, particularly domestic, became the priority. In the late 1990s they borrowed the

slogan from their contacts with women in the city of Santo André and Diadema, developed their own campaign of *Violência, Tô de olho em você* (Violence, I've got on eye on you) and organized debates, encounters and manifestations in 9 different locations throughout the state on March 8. In 1997 the MTM was organizing to insure that the services offered at the *delegacias* were of good quality and was working towards the implementation of shelters. Other topics such as illiteracy and professionalization of women; child prostitution, human rights, election of women to public office have become organizational issues. Using the motto from the Encounter in Beijing, they also developed a series of debates on *Women's rights are human rights* in various cities (Silva 1997).

Thus, by dealing with the problems of women within a particular geographic area or according to ethnic background, autonomous groups identified particular manifestations of discrimination and violence. As noted above, within the black movements and mother's clubs, issues relating to reproductive choice and women's general health were translated into politicized claims and practices. Women's health became an issue concurrent with that of violence against women and groups working on these issues borrowed language and concepts from each other to articulate their cause.

Agencies such as *SOS-Corpo* (SOS-body) in Recife which later developed into a national network, provided gynecological and contraceptive counseling for poor and working-class women and became active in bringing the health needs of women to the public arena. Other non-governmental organizations such as *Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Reprodutivos* (National Feminist Network for Health and Reproductive Rights), *Sempreviva Organização Feminista – SOF* (Alwaysalive Feminist Organization) Catholics for the Right to Choose, *Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saude* (Feminist Collective, Sexuality and Health) took up issues in regards to the legalization of abortion, the problem of forced sterilization, lack of contraceptive information, lack of health services, and the introduction of contraceptive vaccines and the indiscriminant use of NORPLANT. These practices, which were prejudicial to women's health, were eventually articulated as forms of violence against women (see *Mulher e Saude* Nov. 1993).

The issue of women and work continued to be a basic stronghold of women's organizing. Although women throughout the 1980s continued to have difficulties in bringing

their gender-specific needs before the male-dominated unions, they were able to create in 1986 a *Commissão da Questão da Mulher Trabalhadora* (Commission on the Question of the Woman Worker) within one of the largest and most articulate unions – CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) and created the National Department for Women's Issues within the *Central Geral dos Trabalhadores* -CGT (General Center of Workers) (Teles 1993). By working in conjunction with the State and National Council, women promoted strikes against industries which provided poor working conditions and low or discriminatory salaries. The specific needs of women workers, such as daycare, equal pay for equal work, time for nursing children and so on continued to be articulated by women within the unions. Other issues such as male abuse of authority, sexual harassment and abusive practices such as that in the De Millus undergarment industry, where women were forced to undress before security officers to prove they were not stealing factory goods, were presented as forms of violence (Teles 1993). Domestic workers began to question the "domestic" connotation of their work by arguing that the positioning of their work within the private sphere disqualified their profession and left them at the mercy of the paternalistic inclinations of the family. By claiming official status as workers with signed documentation, domestic workers could also claim health and holiday benefits and have more legal recourse if abuses occurred.

In the 1980s rural women workers organized several regional, national and international conferences.[7] Besides the deplorable working conditions to which both male and female rural workers are submitted, women have the additional concerns of working in the fields while pregnant, having to care for their small children in the fields and having to deal with sexual abuses from the private security guards and the work captains as well as from other workers. The document *Violencia contra Mulheres e Menores em Conflitos de Terras* (Violence against Women and Youth in Land Conflicts) prepared by the National Council on Women's Rights (1987) demonstrates that, although the majority of registered crimes against rural workers has been directed against men, women, due to their particular gender-defined sphere of activities, have been submitted to types of violence that are gender-specific and particular to the rural context. Rural violence against small landowners or

[7] See Conselho 1987 for a list of conferences held in 1985 and 1986; see Teles 1994 for a report on the encounter between Peruvian *camponesas* and Brazilian rural workers.

farmworkers has been directed at controlling their political organization, demoralizing them into submission and maintaining the territory and political power of the larger landowners and the traditional oligarchy. Within this context, women have been submitted to specific forms of violence: the destruction of their gardens cultivated for domestic consumption; limits imposed on the free access to water; the mounting of illegal fences which invade their domestic living space; the robbery of domestic items and the destruction of housing; physical and sexual abuses by police; abuse of their children by police; insults and numerous types of pressuring tactics to force them into giving out information regarding the workers' union, the whereabouts of union leaders or their husbands; the murder of family members; their own death.

Within the category of 'rural workers' the document also includes the situation of Amerindian women whose land has been invaded for the purpose of 'clearing the area' for development and who have been submitted to the same types of violent strategies listed above. The letters and testimonies of women reporting in clear and simple language the blatant abuses they have experienced produces an emotionally moving document. Within this context, the principal aggressor is identified as the State, which supports or is controlled by private interests and the repressive forces of the State utilized to maintain this control. "Domestic" violence is construed in terms of State invasion of privacy, control of domestic practices and destructive, physical and sexual abuses within the private sphere by outside repressive forces.

Violence against women was also expanding to include the context of children and adolescents. Backed by studies of sexual violence, feminists came to the conclusion that violence against women begins at childhood and continues up through adulthood. Towards the end of the 1980s the issue of sexual and domestic violence against children was beginning to gain the attention of academics and feminist groups who defined it in terms of social norms. From this perspective, violence against women was articulated as being a problem in terms of socially constructed sex roles in which girls learn from early on to be submissive and passive towards men (União1995; Azevedo, M.A. & Guerra 1989).[8]

[8] For examples of how this discussion continued throughout the 1990s see: Marques,1994 ;Azevedo M.A. & Guerra 1993; Saffioti 1995.

Along these lines, groups such as the *Pastoral da Criança* (Children's Ministry of the Catholic Church) and *Movimento de Meninos and Meninas de Rua* (Street Boys and Girls Movement) denounced the conditions lived by street children and the violence to which they are subject from the police, drug dealers, private security forces, etc (see Câmera dos Deputados 1994). From these discussions, the issue of child prostitution and the national and international trafficking of women became topics of concern. Particularly in Rio de Janeiro and the major cities of the north and northeast, (such as Recife, Fortaleza, Salvador) various groups began to approach this issue often working in conjunction with women's groups in other 'northern' countries where Brazilian women were also suffering violence (Prestello & Dias 1996).

Thus, women within Brazil were beginning to note that "domestic" violence could also include the various forms of violence committed against Brazilian women abroad where they were enticed through job announcements, through marriage mail-order agencies, or simply by individual men who took them home as 'souvenirs.' If adolescent girls and women suffer from lack of information regarding their rights in Brazil, the problem is compounded in a foreign country where they do not speak the language or understand the culture, where there are no family members or friends to give counsel, where their documents may have been confiscated and where fear of the immigration authorities put them at the mercy of prostitution agencies or the wiles of their foreign partners (see Agisra 1990). However, except for particular isolated groups in the north and northeastern cities, this issue did not enter feminist discussion until the 1990s when other issues such as globalization and the problem of AIDS would propel it into public view.

Thus, although 'violence against women' was still construed primarily as interpersonal violence between intimate partners in the private sphere, other types of violence against women were coming into focus which were based not only on gender but also on class, race, age and geographic context (interior/rural). I have given a few examples of groups that have organized around specific issues. Those groups that were able to organize and form an identity by the late 1980s became involved in the development of proposals for the writing of the new national Constitution.

International Dialogues

The United Nation's International Year of the Women and International Decade of the Women provided resources and symbolic justification for women to meet and articulate their concerns upon a broader international base. The cycle of United Nation conferences spurred the organization of other conferences. Women from Latin America and the Caribbean organized a series of conferences during the 1980s and into the 1990s. The tone and internal development of these encounters followed an evolution of feminism from a more 'historical' feminist base to a more popular and diversified understanding of feminism and women's organizing. During the latter part of the 1980s women perceived the importance of organizing networks dealing with specific problems: abortion, health, domestic and sexual violence, communication, race, political participation, etc. (Teles 1993; Sternback et.al. 1992). These conferences would lay the groundwork for international agreements between States to honor the rights of women. Already in 1984, women's organizations together with the National Council were able to secure Brazil's adoption of the convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, although Brazil entered several reservations at that time (see America's Watch 1991).

Summary of the 1980's

During the 1980s women had to adapt their discourses and strategies in accord with the transitional nature of the political climate. Although human rights talk continued to be the idiom of discourse throughout the 1980s, it was initially employed primarily in opposition to an authoritarian regime and later applied to the construction process towards democracy. The women's movement against violence also followed this general tendency by first repudiating violence in order to make it a social issue and later transposing the newly articulated needs into State programs and constitutional rights. Books and pamphlets published by women were aimed at denouncing violence and defining it as a social rather than private problem. Women attempted to build awareness of the problem by illustrating the brutality of the violence and employing descriptive words such as *mulheres espancadas*. They also wrote

leaflets and presented video programs informing women of the criminality of violence, the legal procedures they could follow and what they should expect from the police stations. Finally, they began to develop theoretical frameworks for understanding and articulating the issue of violence against women. The movement against violence against women, therefore, evolved from the movement against state repression and class violence to the gender-specific movement against female homicide to the movement against interpersonal violence against women which was acknowledged by the State and by the population and expanded to include other forms of discrimination and overt aggression.

In the 1980s women were able to access the State apparatus fairly quickly due to the particular Brazilian political context of redemocratization. The fact that women had been active in movements for general changes provided an organizational basis for them to rally around the murder of women and focus on the more gender-specific issue of interpersonal violence. By forming centers to work directly with women who were suffering from violence, activists gained exposure to the particular needs of these women and increased public awareness of the problem. Later, women's infiltration in the State, first as state and federal councils and later within the police department kept the issues of violence against women within political discussions.

The concurrent development of other identities among women and the continued talk of women's needs within politically motivated groups expanded the discussion on violence, which went beyond interpersonal violence between intimates. Violence against women was one of the gender-specific topics that was able to unite women from differing political tendencies and even those women working within other areas such as political parties, rural reform, health and ethnic rights were naming certain discriminatory and abusive practices as forms of violence and thereby widening the understanding of the concept, although the dominant trend continued to identify violence against women as interpersonal violence.

As women reflected about their condition as women and refined their definitions of needs and in-order-to chains, their relationship with other organizations, which they had previously worked with and through, became strained. The insistence of the Church in maintaining a conservative stance in regards to abortion and female sexuality caused many

women's clubs to disband or develop autonomous movements funded by foreign organizations. Women who had been active in the resistance to the military regime and in the creation of oppositional parties were becoming disillusioned with the unwillingness of their male *companheiros* to fully incorporate women's issues into party platforms or for union leaders and members to fully address the needs of women workers. Likewise black women were questioning their position within the black movement and within the white dominated feminist movement.

Most of the discourses on violence followed the general tendency of other social movements in that the key areas of political activity were concentrated in the major coastal cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Later some of the ideas and practices were incorporated in cities and states within the interior sometimes forming badly made copies or producing new and creative transformations. However, within the interior, other understandings of violence were being articulated such as rural violence, mass sterilization and sex tourism.

The general politicized atmosphere of emerging Brazilian democracy was conducive to the forming of a multiplicity of interest groups and those that were ready with language and discourse clamored for representation and recognition within the restructuring of the State. Due to the politicized status of violence against women, particularly at the time of the writing of the new constitution, women were able to make very fundamental changes within the National constitution regarding women's rights in several areas and particularly in regards to domestic violence. Therefore, Brazilian women, when given the opportunity, took the direct route to the State, to implant women's concerns within the state governments, within the police precinct structure and within the constitution. The 1980s culminated in the rewriting of the Brazilian Constitution, which in terms of human rights, boasts perhaps one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, particularly in regards to what has been denominated as 'minority' rights (women, the elderly, children; Afro-Brazilians; Amerindians, etc).

The chasm that had divided women in the late 1970s regarding the need to prioritize gender-specific versus general-issues, by the end of the 1980s was becoming blurred as women noted the need to work on several levels: within the political parties, at the

community level, within the State and within autonomous organizations. International dialogue among women had developed into yet another level of political activity as numerous regional and international conferences were held. These conferences offered a platform on which women could share and articulate their concerns within an arena legitimized by larger institutions such as the United Nations and they equipped women with strong symbolic justifications for the implementation of policies within their own countries as well as offering the opportunity for developing networks.

In the 1990s women reflected on their initiatives and also began to work on a new level of struggle. With the phasing out of the military government, activists took positions within the structures of government. Women working against violence also began to work on this level.

Reflection, Critique and New Strategies of the 1990s

Into the 1990s, the dust began to settle down from the fervent activity of the 1980s and women began to total up their gains and losses. That the 1980s had been an important decade for the Brazilian political system goes without saying. During this short time the nation experienced, among other things, the return to democratic structures; the rewriting of the constitution; and the sprouting of new political parties and organizations. Women organizing had been able to make what appeared to be profound changes not the least of which was a constitution that included a section on domestic violence, or women's police stations which were sprouting up throughout the country. These were two gains that no other country in the world could boast. The 1980s had been the decade of denouncing violence in the private sphere and turning it into a topic of public discussion and of developing theoretical frameworks for understanding violence against women. But by the 1990s women knew that these inroads were not enough and that they would need to penetrate the various levels of State administration if they were to make a lasting change in public policy. They also began to look back as some of their initiatives and analyze their effectiveness. Finally, they also made important theoretical considerations concerning violence against women and women and the State.

Critique of SOS-Mulher

Gregori, in her book *Cenas e Queixas: um estudo sobre mulheres, relações violentas e a prática feminista* (Scenes and Complaints: a study on women, violent relations and feminist practice), published in 1993, offers a biting critique of the *SOS-Mulher* in Sao Paulo and provides insightful considerations concerning the ideological framework employed within these centers. Gregori questions the victim status that was ascribed to the women seeking assistance and, by extension, to all women. She writes that the women activists held to the ideology that violence against women was a universal phenomenon from which all women were victims and all men oppressors; women differed only in the degree of violence they suffered and men only in the degree of oppression they exercised. In the case of the *SOS-Mulher* in São Paulo, violence was defined in terms of the hierarchical differences between the sexes. Thus, there existed only two categories: oppressor = male and oppressed = female. The constant contact with women who had suffered physical violence by males reinforced the already prevalent attitude among the activists that men were the 'enemy' (Gregori 1993). The activists believed that the subordination of women was due to cultural attitudes and beliefs that could be challenged and transformed. Since the feminists held that the process of liberation could be "dis-covered" by women through their collective organization and discussion concerning their identity as women, the work of consciousness-raising among women was given priority (Gregori 1993).

The activists considered that the *SOS-Mulher* should be a place for 'solidarity' among women, where women could come and discuss their situation as women as a group and, through discussions and the support of other women, find solutions to their own problems. The word 'assistentialism' had become in most social movements at that time, including the ecclesiastical base communities, a term used to criticize paternalistic tendencies so characteristic of Brazilian populism and later the military government's social programs. The women activists wanted to differentiate *SOS-Mulher* from the other services offered by the state which were considered to be assistentialist in nature. Within the *SOS-Mulher,* the provision of services (i.e. providing or giving referrals for daycare; employment; medical services; legal services; etc.) was considered a negative aspect of their work and was not

systematized; each woman provided such services according to her own inclinations and contacts. The activist's critique of 'authoritarianism' which had obviously been an important issue within a military dictatorship, led them to adopt a more passive stance with the women, in which they gave a chance for the women to talk about their problems without offering practical intervention. The activists did not want to project themselves as 'experts' but rather as partners or equals in the struggle. Therefore, they avoided representing women or speaking for them (Gregori 1993).

The women who came to the center however, were in search of practical services and were accustomed to the assistentialist nature of other State entities. They were not interested in 'pure discourse' or reflection about the collective situation of women, rather, they were in situations of violence and needed immediate and practical solutions. If the feminist activists considered their shared experiences with the other activists to be important for self-development and consciousness-raising, the same could not be said of the assistance they offered women who came in search of services.

Gregori (1993) illustrates the differences in needs between the activists and the women coming for services in a critique of the decorations used in the reception room in the *SOS-Mulher* of São Paulo. The activists, in an attempt to produce an atmosphere of reflection and discussion, decorated the reception room in accordance with their own aesthetic tastes which were representative of the 1960s counter-culture – large pillows on the floor, Indian sofa covers and posters on the walls. The values expressed by the 1960s counter-culture in Europe and the United States included a critique of the family and bourgeois consumerism and openness to experimenting other forms of relationships outside the limits of formal marriage including casual and homosexual relationships. Such values did not pertain to the women seeking services. Most of these women were from the lower-classes where the acquisition and maintenance of material goods is highly valued. In the absence of material goods, moral values, respectability, and dignity are prioritized and reflected in a "popular aesthetics" of order, symmetry, and cleanliness (Caldeira 1986 cited in Gregori 1993).

What might have been considered a comfortable atmosphere for the activists at *SOS-Mulher* was probably judged by the women as unorganized, chaotic and dirty. The presence of women exchanging embraces or kissing within the *SOS-Mulher* in full view of women

coming for assistance was also noted as a factor which could have deterred women from returning, who valued the family structure despite the problems they were having and who had not been exposed to alternative forms of sexual relationships (Gregori 1993). Therefore, due to many of the factors cited above, the major goal of the activists to organize reflection groups was unsuccessful.

Unlike many of the foreign counterparts, the *SOS-Mulher* in São Paulo did not become involved in political movements or the changing of laws. In Germany, France, England and the United States, for instance, the feminist ideology of the day was very similar to the Brazilian rendition. Men were seen as the dominator and women as the victim of male oppression. In the countries cited above, shelters were organized where women could stay to escape their violent partners in which consciousness-raising activities were considered important components of the daily life within the shelter. The shelters were even described in utopian feminist terms as places where women could meet, free from the authoritarian influences of the patriarchal society (Göttert et. al.1988). In some instances, these ideas are still prominent. However, women in these countries also became very active politically and organized marches, made demands on legislatures, gained government funding and developed alternative 'therapeutic' models. This, in Gregori's (1993) analysis, did not occur in the Brazilian case, due, to a large degree, to the passivity of the activists, their fear of becoming assistentialist, and their general unwillingness to systematize their work.

Gregori (1993) challenges the idea that autonomy should be defined in terms of isolation or separateness and unwillingness to negotiate. Citing the work of Ruth Cardoso (1983; 1987) she compares the *SOS-Mulher* to other social and communitary movements in Brazil. According to R. Cardoso, the neighborhood movements maintained their identity and autonomy athough they at times entered into the same type of political games that they supposedly were against. Rather than basing their strategies on a general premise of transformation of societal structures, they acted on a much more practical level of making specific demands and claims before the State, which, in turn, differentiated them from other movements and guaranteed their oppositional identity. The success of their negotiations amplified their popular base and provided them with legitimacy for continued rounds of negotiations.

However, the volunteers of the *SOS-Mulher* in Sao Paulo in their resistance to authoritarianism were reluctant to articulate needs in the name of battered women; and therefore, did not develop a clear set of claims to be debated in the public sphere, which could identify them as a legitimate oppositional group. Neither did they develop channels by which women could participate in the development of strategies. Likewise, their position against any form of assistentialism limited their participation to that of reflection, which resulted in the "imposition" of a set of values or the attempted "socialization" of these women to accept feminist values, behavior and lifestyle as defined by the activists (Gregori 1993).

Other categories such as race and class were largely ignored. This is surprising given the fact that discussions on class had held and continued to hold such an overarching influence on political movements. In their critique of the predominance of class in the political movements, which overlooked questions of gender, the feminists simple inverted the tables and made gender differences predominant, thereby evading the importance of class or race.

However, the most controversial critique that Gregori (1993) makes is of the discourse that women seeking assistance employed. According to Gregori, the complaint produced by battered woman is a narrative discursive resource used to put blame on the other, affirm her condition as victim and demand support. The success of her narration is measured in her ability to persuade, convince and gain sympathy. By receiving sympathy she gains the right to be a martyr and therefore, enters into a vicious circle in which she needs to portray the man as guilty aggressor in order for her to maintain her role as innocent victim. Gregori cites Bruno Bettelheim's (1980) study on nazi camps and O'Donnell's (1979;1983;1985) work on terrorism as well as the insights offered by Beauvoir (1970) on the situation of women in order to propose that women have become "accomplices" to violence by supporting a love-hate relationship with their intimate partners.

> (...) she helps to create that place in which pleasure, protection or support is realized as long as she portrays herself as a victim. This is the 'black hole' of violence against women: they are situations in which the woman – is not only produced – but produces herself as a non-subject (Gregori 1993 p.184).

Gregori cites examples of interviews she carried out with women at the *SOS-Mulher* to demonstrate the variety of contexts in which violence between intimates could occur and the illusion of presupposing that this multitude of intertwining factors could be explained with a singular theory of dominator-victim in which the male is associated with the aggressive and the woman with the passive role.

Finally, Gregori concludes that working merely on the level of consciousness is not enough to modify the oppression of women; rather, she supports investigations which demonstrate how modifications in gender relations occurred. She cites Caldeira's (1987) research of how women involved in community action began to question and manipulate their roles in order to legitimize their participation in social movements. By so doing, they were also able to modify their understanding of gender roles and negotiate changes in their relationships with their partners.

Gregori's book had an impact on the subsequent organization of other women's centers and also on the development of gender theory about violence against women. In interviews which I carried out in 1997 in São Paulo, most feminists working against violence had read the book and even if they did not entirely agree with Gregori's position, they affirmed the importance of her critique in developing feminist practice. Taking Gregori's critique to heart, Brazilian feminists have analyzed the work of *SOS-Mulher* and concluded that there were many ideological as well as practical problems that hindered its success. Professional social workers when required to develop programs for women's city centers have evaluated *SOS-Mulher* and made a list of its shortcomings that closely resemble Gregori's critique:

1. The conceptualization of these women only as victims, which crystallized sex role stereotypes and blocked any possible solution to the problem of violence between women and men.
2. The assistentialist nature of the Brazilian welfare system which produced the expectation among women for donations of material goods. The *SOS-Mulher* refused to take on this assistentialist character. The majority of the women who came to the centers was looking for solidarity and help and was not prepared to question their role as women.
3. The lack of interconnection with other services which would give continuity to their services.

4. The lack of specialized training for volunteers in listening to and assisting women hindered the quality of services offered and did not prepare them for personal crisis and stress related to the work. This lack of training was based on the feminist conviction that all women shared the same conditions of oppression in the society. By merely becoming conscious of the feminist ideology, they were considered to be prepared to assist women at the center. (Stampacchio & Pavez 1995)

What is interesting in the Brazilian case is that the feminists were relatively quick to perceive the errors of this ideology and practice and forego the "radical" feminist ideology in favor of a more complex understanding of women and violence. The shortcomings inherent in focusing only on women's experience as victims of male dominance were within a relatively short time frame – 10 years - identified, and new theoretical frameworks and practices were developed in an attempt to correct these problems. However, there were definite repercussions concerning Gregori's use of the word 'accomplice.'

In an attempt to understand the victimization phenomenon, Vinagre Silva already in 1992 uses Chaui's (1986) concept of *tragic consciousness* to describe the contradictory and ambiguous elements in the relation of domination-exploitation within the popular classes. According to Chaui, members of the popular classes may express feelings of impotence, guilt and conformity while at the same time expressing indignation and revolt. They may express resistance without having a clear idea of what the new order of things should be and present signs of complicity by bowing to established authorities. Vinagre Silva notes how women, who resist and revolt against male domination, may also simultaneously submit and conform to it.

Saffioti (1994) follows the line of Catherine Mackinnon (1989) in defining the State as phallocratic in which masculine power over women is normalized and only its excesses are prohibited or criminalized. Within this context, she argues, a woman might *appear* to be consenting to her own subordination but this would imply that she has the power to decide. Within a hierarchical context in which men dominate women, the consciousness of the oppressed is different from that of the oppressor. Women, for the most part, receive a negative impact from the violent relationship; and therefore, can be considered perhaps as "co-participants" but not "accomplices" to the violence. She advocates criminal punishment

for violence against women, asserting that the assurance of impunity accounts for a large parcel of domestic violence.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, Calligaros (1994) hypothesizes that the ideal for marriage or partnerships based on modern notions of romantic love and equality is almost impossible to achieve. Frustrated by these impossibilities a couple may revert to the "irrational" use of violence as a modern form of gender relationships.

Thus from the Brazilian context, various interpretations arose to explain and understand women's involvement in the violence, employing terminology such as "accomplice," or "co-participant," although some feminists still show lack of satisfaction with these terms (Heilborn 1994). In any case, a definite break was made with the dualistic conceptions of male versus female. Moreover, the failure in the 1980s of the *SOS-Mulher* to provide adequate services or an alternative feminist model would lead to discussion concerning the development of feminist practice and ideology in the 1990s.

Municipal Services for Women in Situations of Violence

In the 1988 municipal elections, the Worker's Party came out the victor in a significant number of cities throughout Brazil and since it was considered to be the party most concerned with social issues, feminists and women's groups hoped to gain support for the installation of municipal entities which would fulfill their needs. Once again, the city of São Paulo provided an interesting model for municipal services.

As I witnessed the elections in the city of Sao Paulo during this time, I was struck by the discussions about whether the Worker's Party, which had been a successful oppositional party, could effectively administrate a large city like Sao Paulo. The fact that the candidate came from the northeast raised eyebrows since the migration of unskilled labor from the northeast in search of work in Sao Paulo had considerably challenged the existing infrastructure of the city to accommodate such a large influx of people, leaving many to fend for themselves in shantytowns or on the streets. However, what surprised me was that little discussion centered on the fact that the candidate was a woman. When Luisa Erundina de Souza won the election, she became mayor of the largest city in South America and one of

the largest cities in the world. Whether a woman was capable of administrating a large city had not been a main issue in the campaign, but rather her party affiliation and her place of origin. Although she was not an avowed feminist, women considered her sympathetic to feminist concerns and organized to request the installation of municipal agencies and policies that would attend to the problem of violence against women and other gender-specific issues.

In 1989, women who had supported Luiza Erundina in the election constituted a study group, *Grupo de Trabalho-Mulher* (Women's Work Group), to make recommendations for the municipal government in regards to women's issues. In their final proposal was the creation of a special women's municipal *coordenadoria* or council which was created in November 1989 with the objectives of formulating, coordinating and monitoring policies as well as developing projects to combat sexual discrimination, defend women's rights and guarantee the full manifestation of women's capacity within the municipality of Sao Paulo. The *coordenadoria* would also function to coordinate the work of the various offices in regard to women's issues - Health, Education, Security and so on (Pavez 1997). The original proposal was for the *coordenadoria* to have its own budget, however, this never occurred due to bureaucratic obstacles.[9] Two major initiatives came out of the work of the *coordenadoria*: specialized services in women's health; and policies and services combating violence against women.

Within the area of health, the public hospital in the neighborhood of Jabaquara (Hospital Dr. Arthur Ribeiro de Saboya) initiated services for abortions allowed by law (II art. 128) – in cases of rape or high health risk to the mother. The hospital in Jabaquara was the only hospital that would offer such services free of charge, thereby providing a right for which low-income women had previously no recourse (Pavez 1997).

In response to the problem of violence against women, the *Casa Eliane de Grammont* was inaugurated in 1990 and became a model for praxis as well as a case example of difficulties feminists have encountered in dealing with the issue of violence against women within the State apparatus. The initial objectives of the *Casa Eliane Grammont* were to exercise a feminist intervention with women in situations of violence in alliance with other

[9] For more details about the inner workings of São Paulo city politics and bureaucracy at that time see Stampacchio & Pavez 1995.

existing services; provide educative and preventative work; give political visibility to the problem of violence against women; elaborate documents and material for general distribution to the population; and organize seminars, courses and training (Pavez 1997). Up to that point, the only actual model of an agency which served women in violent relationships had been the *SOS-Mulher,* but there was a general consensus that the *Casa* should learn from the critiques made of *SOS-Mulher* and not repeat the same mistakes. On the other hand, the *Casa* was a government, professional agency and represented a new step in the development of strategies to combat violence. Unlike *SOS-Mulher*, staffed by volunteers and militant feminists, the *Casa* was staffed by professionals who had passed the state exams to become public municipal workers. Thus, the *Casa* marked a new level of involvement within the women's movement since feminist sensibility alone was not considered sufficient for carrying out the work of the house. As Pavez (1997) states:

> In the *SOS-Mulher*, in the name of a political-ideological option of solidarity there was a denial of both a professional attitude and the use of accumulated scientific knowledge as well as the absence of a systematic plan of intervention. What was important was the development of consciousness, political involvement and the conviction of building a process of breaking with the inequalities between men and women (p.136).

The women who founded the *Casa* foresaw the need for specialized *professional training* for those who would work with women in situations of violence. In an interview with the staff of *Casa Eliane Grammont* many admitted that they had not considered themselves feminists before they were employed at the *Casa*. Rather, through their work and training they had become sensitized to the plight of women in situations of violence, had studied the concept of gender and made the connection between domestic violence and social inequalities between men and women. (personal communication with Pavez, 1997)

Their initial discussions centered on the problem of falling into the victimization theory of female oppression, which was so evident in the *SOS-Mulher,* versus the problem of the functionalistic approach of a government agency attempting to neutralize the problem. In the beginning, the initial feminist ideology that women have the conditions to better help other women was accepted and only women professionals were assigned to the *Casa*. The

idea that women were victims of violence due to male domination was initially used as a theoretical basis; however, through the discussions on gender the professionals of the *Casa* began to question the appropriateness of the label, "women, victims of violence," which was later understood as misrepresenting the whole of the feminine condition of struggle for survival as well as the other social situations in which she was a part. The use of the term *women in situations of violence* was more acceptable because it did not label women as victims nor did it construct men as oppressors, but rather it named the situation that potentially could be changed, thus providing a window of hope. The definition of Marilena Chaui which provided a broad understanding of violence and stressed the struggle for rights, autonomy and respect was incorporated into the objectives of the *Casa* along with the model of empowerment (Pavez 1997).

The professionals of the *Casa* opted for this definition of violence because it provided a position contrary to the assistentialist tendency of the state services that had been provided up to this point. Based on this concept, the professional team of the *Casa* directed their interpretations and institutional practices on the identification of themselves and the women who came to the *Casa* as subjects of their own lives and they focused their attention on the interpersonal relationships between men and women. Although these women had registered the violence at the police station and had initiated some divorce or criminal proceedings against the aggressor, it was evident to the professionals of the *Casa* that no significant alteration in the everyday behavior of these women had occurred. The concept of gender allowed for the study of both men and women and how social and political inequalities are reproduced and maintained within the existing social structure. The concept that women play a part through their passivity and identification with this structure provided a practical and theoretical window that enabled the *Casa* professionals and the women in situations of violence to explore how they could use their power to question their attitudes especially in relationship to men and to sexist structures, exercise their rights and develop autonomy (Pavez 1997).

The professionals of the *Casa* were aware of their position as a municipal institution, which is often characterized for its impersonal, assembly line approach. Therefore, they opted for individualized assistance for each woman who requested services rather than focusing

their activities on reflection groups. Individualized services were an attempt to provide the opportunity for each woman to be heard, to explain her individual and unique situation that touched a very private and delicate issue – her relationship with her partner. The necessary referrals and connections to the judicial system and support to secure her safety were the first priorities after hearing her present her case. Follow-ups prioritized individual support, which was considered important for the process of maturation before taking part in groups. Pavez (1997) observes that the fact that the woman is aware that other women also suffer from situations of violence does not translate mechanically into the awareness that this is a social problem. Therefore, after securing the woman's safety, the *Casa* professionals sought to increase the women's awareness of her identification with the role of victim and discuss the ambiguities involved in such an identification so that she could overcome and break away from this role. The objective was to contribute to the woman's perception of her involvement in the reproduction of sex-role stereotypes and examine how this contributed to the situation of violence.

Therefore, during the term of Luiza Erundina, the *Casa Eliane Grammont* developed into a municipal center that provided a professional multi-disciplinary praxis for assisting women in situations of violence through theoretical and methodological reflections based on the concept of gender. However, the feminist movement and the professionals were not only interested in providing services and theoretical reflection, their continued objective was to persist in the politicization of the issues of violence against women. To this end, they took on a series of initiatives, such as the production of written material about violence against women; interaction with other entities working with women; the realization of a city conference about violence; the organization of training for professionals working with women in situations of violence; participation at all events important to the struggle for women's rights and in defense of social policies which would deal with gender violence including international conferences and particularly those of Latin America and the Caribbean (Pavez 1997). Thus, while the work of the *Casa* was to make violence and the discussion of violence against women more public and visible, the services provided to the women were individual and confidential. The *Casa*, therefore, works with and recognizes the

universal and particular manifestations of violence and attempts to deal with this on both levels, publicly and individually.

The *Casa* was not equipped to meet all of the needs of the women who frequented it nor was this its intention. The importance of working with other agencies within the city government and the development of other projects to deal with needs such as shelter or adolescent development soon became apparent. Unable to receive funding or personnel from the administration for legal services, the women needing legal assistance were referred to other organizations such as the Law School, the organization of Lawyers in Brazil, public legal assistance and non-governmental groups. For material assistance women were referred to agencies organized by the Welfare Secretary. Although there was an exchange between the *Casa* and these other institutions, there was no official relationship that could have facilitated the referrals due in part to the resistance of the project coordinators to incorporate State assistentialism within the project. However, within a city public service such as the *Casa*, there was no way to escape from providing direct material assistance, especially since many of the women who asked for help came from situations of poverty. Even though the priority of the women coming to the *Casa* was security and freedom from violence, in most cases this could not be effectively dealt with without providing material assistance (Pavez 1997).

In August 1991 the women's shelter, *Casa Abrigo:Helenira Rezende de Souza Nazareth*, was created to provide safe, temporary housing for women and their children for up to 90 days. Once again there was a problem of receiving sufficient material, financial and human resources for the initiative. Several municipal workers who were also militant feminists were assigned to the shelter and the team of the *Casa Eliane Grammont* was made responsible for the various shelter services. Women were referred to the shelter by the *delegacias* or other participating organizations and received individualized social, legal and psychological orientation. The women working at the *Casa* faced innumerous difficulties in coordinating the different services provided by various secretaries. For instance, daycare, kitchen utensils, food provisions, the actual building, and security were all provided from different entities, which caused organizational as well as bureaucratic problems. In September 1992, the house closed for reforms, during which time the term of government changed and the house remained closed (Pavez 1997; Stampacchio & Pavez 1995). With the

election of Worker's party candidate and feminist, Marta Suplicy as mayor of São Paulo in 2000, the shelter was reinstalled and efforts have been made to increase services for women in situations of violence.

Thus, the professionals working in the *Casa* were concerned with their political/ administrative positioning as a municipal entity. With the left securing control at the municipal level, women's groups no longer directed their efforts primarily to oppositional politics, but towards the incorporation and infiltration of the State with their programs and ideology. The work within the apparatus of the State, however, demanded a new set of strategies and marked a new phase in the development of services directed towards women. The problem of city bureaucracy and the provision of funding, which would have to go through administrative channels, proposed new challenges to this type of work. The feminist experience within the government constituted negotiations with the police, with attorneys, social workers, and with the state commission on violence. This involved working according to job descriptions, negotiating salaries and dealing with bureaucracies and political functionalism (Pavez 1997).

During the term of the conservative mayor Paulo Maluf of the Partido Progressista Brasileiro (Progressive Brazilian Party) (1992-1996) and his successor Celso Pitta (1996-2000), the work of the *Casa* was reduced to direct assistance to women while the political project of producing theoretical analysis of the problem and of educating the public and other professionals about the issue of gender and violence was sharply reduced. The abortion services in the Jabaquara hospital were closed. If the problem of securing funds for the *coordenaria* was a problem during Erundina's term, it became even more critical during Maluf's term. Feminists evaluated their inability to see the complexities of municipal administration at the very beginning – perhaps due to ideology, perhaps due to lack of experience in administration (Pavez 1997).

Feminists have analyzed their attempts to develop policy and services dealing with violence against women and have identified some of the shortcomings apparent within the case of São Paulo. The implantation of the *coordenadoria* was symptomatic of a certain political naivete of those working to open up space in the municipal government. The feminist groups wanted a ministry (*secretaria*) with power of execution unlike the state and

national councils, which had not been able to carry out policies independently. However, particularly in Sao Paulo, there was a movement to limit the number of *secretarias* as a means to diminish bureaucracy, making plans for adding a new *secretaria* politically unfeasible. The *coordenadoria* was implanted without clear objectives of how it was to function and ideological differences arose on how it should be directed. The problem of bureaucracy left many feminists without access to the *coordinadoria* and there was a breakdown in democratic processes. This problem was radicalized during the term of Paulo Maluf. In the analysis of gender it was also evident that women in situations of authority could take on anti-democratic roles (Pavez 1997).

However, the *Casa* was able to survive 8 years of a conservative administration primarily due to its popular support. With the election of Marta Suplicy, an avowed feminist of the Worker's Party who has been supportive of the movement against violence, the *Casa* has gained renewed support. Currently in São Paulo, there are plans to expand the work of the *Casa* and install new city centers for women in situations of violence. Such are the ups and downs of municipal attempts to deal with gender-specific problems in São Paulo.

Although the *Casa*, served as a model and leader within the national context, other cities were developing entities to serve women and develop political projects within their particular context. The *Casa Beth Lobos* of the *Coordenadoria Municipal da Mulher de Diadema* (Municipal Coordination of the Woman of Diadema) was a municipal initiative of women in the region of Diadema, just outside São Paulo. In 1992 through a signature drive, the women's movement was able to secure an organic municipal law that guaranteed the existence of an agency that would serve women. The proposal of the women's movement was to establish a municipal entity that would provide legal, social and psychological guidance for women in situations of violence. The *Casa Beth Lobos* also offers a project to help women become financially independent. However, employees of the house are hired through the process of general municipal exams and those who pass are not necessarily women who participated in the women's movement nor are they trained to deal with this type of problem (personal communication with Director July, 1997).

Santo André also provides an interesting example of the advances and setbacks of feminist municipal politics. From 1989 to 1992, the Worker's Party administration was able

to implant a municipal office for Women's Rights (*Assesoria dos Direitos da Mulher*); a delegacia in cooperation with the state government; social service assistance at the *delegacia*; a House to assist women; training for those working in the area of violence including a course for the Civil Guard and human service professionals. In 1993, when the PTB won office, all of these policies were cut off. Only the *delegacia* remained as a state-run entity. In 1997, the Worker's Party once again won the mayoral elections and women were again organizing within the municipal government for services. One principal difference between the situation in Santo André and São Paulo was that women had organized before the elections and had already developed clear proposals of how the needs of women should be met by the city. When the Worker's Party took office, many of these proposals were already part of the platform (personal communication Matilde Ribeiro of the *Assessoria dos Direitos da Mulher* of Santo André July, 1997)

The city of Rio Grande in Acre, located on the border of the Amazon rain forest, with a record percentage of female homicides, and a history of lawlessness and corruption could be considered to be an unlikely place for concerted feminist action. However, women's movements and national discussion concerning violence against women have infiltrated the area and left their mark. Towards the end of the 1980s several non-governmental entities were founded to work in the area of human rights and women's rights: the Center for the Defense of Human Rights and Popular Education founded in 1989 worked with groups in the popular neighborhoods; the Acre Network of Men and Women founded in 1988 has worked primarily in rural areas; the women's police station was installed in 1986. A research project carried out by UNIFEM and the Ford Foundation reported that Rio Grande had one of the highest ratios of homicides against women in relation to the size of its population, 80 percent of these occurred between intimate partners.

At the same time, reports about child-prostitution in Acre sensitized the population and the federal government, which supported the elaboration of a project with the city and the non-governmental groups to provide an entity that would serve women in situations of violence and give assistance to girl prostitutes. The *Casa Rosa* was inaugurated in 1993 and offered social, legal assistance and educational training for the women. In 1994 the *Casa Rosa* won an award from the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration as one of the

three most innovating attempts to develop paradigms in citizenship in regards to violence against women. In 1996 the *Casa Rosa* won a National contest of Experiences in Administration and Current Citizenship. The *Casa Rosa* has continued to develop other projects to meet the needs of the women in the municipality. For instance, *Rosa Viva,* a project directed towards the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases in the regions of prostitution, and *Rosa Minina,* an art education project for girls between the ages of 8 and 14, were initiated by *Casa Rosa* (CDHEP 1997). However, with the elections in 1996, the popular front lost ground to the new mayor of PMDB, and the Municipal Council of Women's Rights has been attempting to continue the work of *Casa Rosa Mulher* despite the loss of political support (CDHEP 1997)

In Porto Alegre in Rio Grande do Sul the *Casa de Apoio Viva Maria* (The House of Assistance, Viva Maria) was inaugurated in 1992 with a multi-disciplinary team of professionals from the following areas: psychology, social work; administration, nursing, education, nutrition and occupational therapy. The objective of the house is "the recovery of self-esteem and the construction of individual autonomous subjective references for each of the women who finds herself in a situation of violence" (*Casa* 1993). Physical education students volunteered their time at the House and developed a therapeutic project they nominated "body work" directed towards the woman's relationship with her body (abused and battered) and the questioning of stereotypical version and myths about the feminine body. The *Casa Viva Maria* is one of the few centers that has developed a therapeutic model for intervention in the lives of the women. Due to the successive progressive administrations in Porto Alegre, the *Casa Viva Maria* has been able to continue its work.

These are just a few examples of the municipal centers for assisting women in situations of violence that have been sprouting up and developing practice and theory in regards to women and violence according to the particular municipal context. While these centers have produced interesting inroads in regards to assisting women, and in the development of State-run agencies, they are also precariously situated for they depend on the political will of the current municipal government. Thus, when elected officials were sympathetic to their cause, funding was approved and allocated, when elected officials were less inclined to support their work, funds were cut and their work limited. It is important to

note that despite the problems women confronted in the unions, the Worker's Party has become the strongest partisan vehicle for feminist politics. In most cases, it was through their organizing within the Worker's Party that women were able to implement public policies regarding violence against women. However, the survival of the *Casa Eliane Grammont* during the conservative years was due to its popular support. This indicates that a civil society intent on protecting its rights has the possibility of withstanding State tendencies to deny these rights.

Critique of the Delegacias

By the early 1990s women were also beginning to see some of the shortcomings of the *delegacias*. The police stations themselves have become spots of conflicting interests since feminists, policewomen, and the public have projected onto the *delegacias* specific expectations.

One of the primary advances in the installation of women's police stations, according to the women's movement, was that it potentially created conditions free from male harassment and sexist bias where women could file criminal charges of violence. The willingness of the State to offer such stations was considered to be an acknowledgment of criminal violence against women in the private sphere and of the sexism inherent in State institutions such as the civil police. Feminists theorized that men considered that their violent behavior against women was a private matter that could be left up to personal prerogative; once such behavior was socially unacceptable and criminally punished, men would no longer act in violent ways towards women. Therefore, the *delegacias* were initially seen as instruments for stopping violent crime against women.

However, feminists have noted that the women police chiefs do not necessarily share their perspective. First, they do not always provide a conducive atmosphere for women who seek help. In my interviews with women who sought out the services of the *delegacias* and with the social workers employed at the stations, the women police chiefs were accused of being "worse than men" and a series of complaints arose concerning the quality of services offered at the police stations: the police women do not respect the women's privacy (holding

initial interviews in the hall or talking in a loud voice about a certain case so all in the waiting room could hear); they use confrontational and intimidating strategies normally used against criminals; they fail to fill out all of the necessary paperwork or inform women of the necessary steps such as presenting themselves at the Institute of Forensic Medicine to perform examinations required by law; they display sexist and class biases. Also, many of those working as social workers at the police stations are not fully qualified professionals but rather interns. Given the difficulties involved in working with violence in the family, it is doubtful whether interns could provide efficient and adequate services.

The lack of specialized training or standardized forms of assistance to sensitize police workers of the particular needs of women who suffer violence has led feminists to question the quality of services that women receive at the *delegacias* and if the *delegacias* are achieving their proposed objectives. Women's organizations have reacted, in part, by publishing informational pamphlets in an attempt to educate the population about what could be considered a crime, what they should expect from the police and what the necessary steps are in the processing of a crime.[10] The need for specialized training had been included in the original project for the *delegacias* but due to financial and political problems within the police departments, the training, when provided, fell short of the original goals. In my interviews at the *delegacias*, the police chiefs responded indignantly to the idea of further training, citing that they had already passed through the academy, had taken the necessary exams to qualify and had years of practical experience. The response I received from one police chief (July 1997) for instance, demonstrates such indignation but also betrays her class bias: "After seven years here, I've already learned everything there is to know.... The poorer they are, the more ignorant they are, the more violent they are."

Despite the limits of the police stations, activists continue to support their installation for they remain the only available official recourse against violence for many women. In fact, women hope to expand the number of police stations, since they remain concentrated in the state of São Paulo and in urban areas while they are sparsely scattered within the interior,

[10]A few examples are: Prefeitura de Rio Branco, *Conselho Municipal dos Direitos da Mulher*,pamphlet; Coordenadoria Municipal da Mulher, Casa Beth Lobo, *Violência: tô de olho em você,* Prefeitura de Diadema 1993-1996. Conselho Estadual da Condição Feminina, *Delegacia de Defesa da Mulher*, São Paulo 1988, pamphlet; *Violência contra a Mulher*.

leaving rural women fewer resources when confronted with violence. Thus, although acknowledging the continued importance of the police station and the need to work together with them, most activists have reduced their expectations concerning the role police stations could have in deterring violence against women.

The policewomen themselves also have an invested interest in the functioning of the *delegacias*. However, the first and seemingly unanimous complaint which I heard from the employees within the women's police stations is lack of personnel, resources and materials which is a problem they share with the entire police department. Generally underpaid and feeling overworked without the necessary infrastructure, those working within the *delegacias* feel that they are severely limited. Most policewomen I interviewed were intent on demonstrating the legitimacy of their work, on reporting how many violent crimes had been sent in to the judicial branch that month and on demonstrating that "heavy stuff" is dealt with at the station. Their defensive posture is due, in part, from currents within the police department that consider the women's police stations as mere social work stations and question whether such specialized *delegacias* are indeed necessary. In my interviews with the policewomen, they showed mixed reactions to their work in the women's stations. Some noted that even policewomen tended to belittle the work at the *delegacias,* although "once they come, they like it and want to stay."

The difficulty in processing crimes against women, especially since most of the time witnesses are absent and the only proof is the medical report, is yet another issue posed by the police women. Those crimes considered to have caused serious injury are public-action crimes and depend on the State to initiate prosecution. Private-action crimes include lighter injuries and most sexual crimes and depend on the victim to file charges that he/she can discontinue at anytime. After making a charge the woman must proceed to the Medical-Legal Institute for an examination. When the examination is forwarded to the police, the case is sent to the justice department for prosecution (America's Watch 1991). Since 1984 the punishment for lighter crimes has been 10 days in jail, a small fine or community service, which does not correspond to needs of women in situations of violence since she must continue to live with her violent partner. Harsher crimes (*lesão grave*) such as incapacitating the women for 30 days or causing a permanent disability are more rare and difficult to prove.

Some of these processes may take up to a year. In the end, the women may consider the entire process to be futile because even if the aggressor is found guilty, the punishments set (such as a fine or food basket) do not correspond to the nature of domestic violence.

Given these limits, the policewomen have incorporated into their routine, practices that are not officially recognized by law. For instance, policewomen have admitted to taking some liberties to protect women such as holding an inebriated man at the station and offering him coffee or tea until he "settles down" or even holding a man overnight. Also, rather than immediately filing a report, the police may first require the abuser to come before the police to discuss his violent behavior. Sometimes this is threatening enough to make him stop the violence and the woman may decide not to carry through with a criminal charge. This follows a similar common practice of parents who bring their wayward sons to the station so that the police could "teach them a lesson." Although this practice could be considered a form of violent police abuse, a similar although less overtly violent practice has been occurring within the *delegacias* in which women simply want the police women to threaten their husbands in order to "shock" them into changing their behavior.

Police women note that most of the women who come to the *delegacias* are not interested in filing a criminal complaint, rather they want an authority figure to interfere in their relationship so that changes are imposed. As the police chief in São Bernardo do Campo explained:

> These women want us to solve their problems. One woman asked us if we couldn't give him a beating (...) many women want to get married or want us to make him stop having an affair. They want us to change their frog into a prince! (personal communication, July 1997)

If we take into account the continuing police violence that the popular classes experience on a day-to-day basis within their neighborhoods, the request that the police "give him a beating" could be understood as a very logical request: If their partner can become a victim of police violence for merely walking the streets, why can't the police give him a beating to stop him from hurting his wife?

The policewomen retort that those who complain about the *delegacia* have set their expectations too high because they are unaware of the real function of the *delegacia*. The police chief in São Bernardo offered the example of a woman who had accused her husband of using a gun against her. Upon investigating the report, it came out that the woman had merely made up the story as a way to avenge her husband and the police reacted by filing a report against her. The policewomen contend that the *delegacias* have an important but singular role and that they cannot be expected to prevent violence or deal directly with the causes, which they hold to be related to general education and culture, poverty, machismo, financial stress, alcohol and frustration.

In terms of the general population, the *delegacias* have been well received. However if the generic police stations doubled as information centers for the population that did not have other forms of access to information, the same has occurred with the women's police stations. In my interviews with women waiting to register a complaint, problems such as adultery, sexual incompatibility, differences in child rearing, financial disagreements and so on were given by women as their reason for coming. The woman chief police of Campinas stated that the *delegacias* have become "deposits" for all types of problems for which people cannot find services.

The woman chief police of the *delegacia* in the central neighborhood of the Sé, in São Paulo, when discussing her previous position as police chief in a small town, reported that she had to carry out a number of roles that went well beyond her job description as police chief:

> I was father, mother, priest, nurse, counselor, and doctor for these people. Mother's would call me about childhood diseases. I would have *clients* who just wanted to speak to an authority – even problems of health or sexual problems. I would give them books and sometimes their sexual life improved!... People would bring me presents and flowers. Even here in São Paulo the personnel [of the *delegacia*] say that I have my clients who come in each month just to talk (personal communication July, 1997)

Within Brazil's personalistic society, the effectiveness of the delegacias seems to reside in the particular ability of the policewomen to deal with the people. Therefore, although there have been a number of cases where women suffering from physical violence

have made charges and women have been given protection and offered shelter, the vast majority of women who go to the *delegacias* are not interested in making a formal charge and if they do, they often drop it later on. In the context of limited therapeutic services for the popular classes, women have attempted to use the police stations for such purposes. The police stations have become a place where women could vent their frustrations and it has served as a place for them to meet their subjective needs for someone to mediate, much like middle- and upper-class women might ask a psychologist or therapist to do.

Aware of the overload of non-criminal complaints made at the *delegacias*, there have been attempts to alleviate this problem. In the city of Santo André, São Paulo, for example, a project was presented to the city to provide a Center of Support and Reference which would act as the "port of entrance" for women rather than the *delegacias* (personal communication Mathilde Ribeiro 1997). Other projects include the presence of trained social workers and psychologists at the police stations.

The presence of social workers and psychologists at the police stations (*Plantão Social*) had existed since the middle of the 1970s because it was evident that many people who came to the police stations had problems that were of a social rather than a criminal nature. There was an agreement made in the state of Sao Paulo between the Secretary of Social Promotion who provided the social workers and the Secretary of Public Security who provided the infrastructure. When the *delegacias* were created based on the existing structures, the social assistance branch was also incorporated as part of the station (Pavez 1997).

If the *delegacias* are equipped with social workers or psychologists, they can offer referrals and therapeutic support. In cases where women are looking for mediation the social workers have offered couple therapy. The fact that their offices are located within the police structure produces a context much different from the normal therapeutic clinic. In my interviews with social workers, they admitted to using the police station's letter head to give a more "official" and intimidating look to their request that the male partner appear for a session. The men, often thinking that they had received a police summons, felt compelled to attend. Within the session, the social workers have used the presumed authority of their position within the police structures to further question the man's violent behavior, although

they stressed that their main objective was to change the violent behavior in an attempt towards reconciliation. They also indicated cases where they thought the woman had aggravated the situation and needed to modify her behavior as well.

One of the social workers in São Bernardo de Campo in São Paulo had developed a number of creative projects such as organizing an AA group for men in a nearby church facility, creating a puppet show for women's groups to inspire discussion and reflection on the topic of domestic violence within their community, and holding monthly women's group meetings to discuss domestic violence. All of this was based on her own personal motivation, and was severely limited by the lack of resources available to her. Therefore, differently from the shelters in Europe and the United States where the underlying motive is often separation, and the blame is put almost exclusively on the male for his violent behavior, the social workers in the police stations have attempted to focus on the interrelational problems between men and women. However, there has been little systematic work in this area and most of the social workers have not received any type of formal preparation for this type of therapeutic work. When such services are not available the policewomen double as counselors, using sometimes the confrontational strategies they have learned within the police academy or methods based on their own personal skills (personal communication 1997).

The *delegacias* have also become places of contested political interests. The popularity of the women's police stations has provided politicians with an opportunistic strategy to gain popular support. As the woman police chief in Campo Grande told me, "Everyone wants to be the father of this baby." Candidates for governor, mayor and other elected positions include the promise of installing a women's police station in their campaign. There have been times when stations have been opened with great political pomp only to be quietly closed or directed towards other purposes soon afterwards due to lack of funding or demand. (personal communication Silma, Conselho Estadual da Condição da Mulher July 1997)

In relation to international exchanges the structure of the women's police station has been hailed as a pioneering achievement worldwide (Alvarez, S.E. 1990). Especially within Latin America, the Brazilian model has been replicated and Brazil has been considered a

frontrunner in the development of strategies to combat violence against women (Organização dos Estados Americanos 1996).

Thus, while it appears that most Brazilian women would agree that the women's police stations are a vital part of the overall strategy of combating violence against women and should, therefore, be supported, the limits in the functioning of these stations have uncovered a number of other problem areas or links in the in-order-to chain. Feminists have perceived the need for specialized training of police personnel, social workers and psychologists working at the stations; for educating the population in regards to what they can and should expect from the police stations; for increased material and human resources at the stations; for the installation of information and referral centers which could alleviate the police from having to attend to non-criminal complaints; as well as for changes in legislation and within the judicial branch.

There is increasing talk about whether pressing formal charges is the best route to take for women in situations of violence. Obviously, many women do not think so, for instead of following through on the charges, they have been using the police stations to fulfill their subjective needs The problem as Gregori (1993) has pointed out is that there are varieties of relationships and positioning within the rubric of domestic violence and not all cases can be solved with a police report or a jail sentence.

The civil police as part of the apparatus of repressive forces within the State has a long-standing history of corruption and inefficiency. Without an overall reform in the police department including better training, better salaries, monitoring and control, it is doubtful if the women's police stations will be able to perform any better than their male counterparts.

Focusing on the Legal Process

Feminists in their reflections about the limits of the police stations, perceived that it was not enough for women to be able to make an incident report at the police station if laws condemning violence against women were not ratified and if the judges, attorneys and juries continued to uphold sexist attitudes and interpretations of the laws. Therefore, the securing of women's police stations was only the first in a series of steps that had to be taken if violence

against women was to be considered a criminal offense. Thus, in the 1990s feminists also turned their energies toward the adoption of legislation regarding violence against women and toward the impunity granted by the courts.

Legislation

Having made significant gains in the constitution, women began the long and arduous task of securing that these official rights were transformed into actual laws. Women have found that once again the State has been able to neutralize their gains by simply stalling. While the Brazilian constitution can boast perhaps one of the most progressive constitutions in regards to human rights and women's rights *on paper*, legislation that reflects such rights has yet to be passed.

Many feminists who had been working within the State in the 1980s, transferred their energies into forming non-governmental agencies such as the *Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria – Cfemea* (Feminist Center for Research and Consulting) and *Cidadania, Estudos, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação* – CEPIA (Citizenship, Study, Research, Information and Action) to monitor the formation of laws and judicial response to crimes against women (Alvarez, S.E. 1994). The Penal code which was elaborated in 1940 based on Napoleon law (as opposed to common law found in England and the United States) still considers crimes of rape for example as "crimes against customs" rather then crimes against the person. In such cases, the "honor" of the victim is considered to be damaged and not her physical body. This allows, therefore, for the "recuperation" of honor if the victim marries the aggressor or a third person, in which case the aggressor is exempt from punishment. The use of the adjective "honest" to characterize the victim of these crimes can "disqualify" women if the defense is successful in questioning the woman's past behavior as spouse and mother. It also effectively bars prostitutes from seeking justice from violent sexual crimes (Barsted 1994b). Another anachronism still in effect within the Brazilian legislation is that adultery is characterized as a crime although it has been used primarily against women. Other norms such as paternal

power, the privilege given to the male partner in home ownership, crime of seduction, and others have yet to be revoked.[11]

Sexual harassment was an issue that could unite women working against violence and women within the unions because it included both issues of violence and the workplace. Sexual harassment is considered to occur when the owner of an establishment, the supervisor or other superior, a colleague or client approach a worker with a proposal with sexual connotations; confide in the worker about intimate or embarrassing stories; make insistent and indiscreet approaches; attempt to buy favors with questionable generosity or with threats concerning employment; attempt to accept proposals by blackmail or by false emotional manipulation; promise advantages or promotions dependent on the acceptance of sexual proposals. (taken from União 1995). However, the issue of sexual harassment has gone beyond the workplace. Already in the 1980s The *SOS Mulher* of São Jose dos Campos in the state of São Paulo prepared a pamphlet concerning sexual harassment in public transportation where crowded conditions facilitated acts of molestation, the whispering of malicious comments, or sexual advances (*SOS-Mulher* undated). In 2001, Congress approved legislation making sexual harassment a crime.

In 1992, the feminist movement was able to install a Parliamentary Commission of Investigation (*Comissão Paralamentar de Inquérito – CPI*) to search out and examine the particulars of violence against women in all of the Brazilian states from May to October of 1992. Once again, few feminist movements in other countries could boast of such an investigation on a national scale by the government! The results of the commission demonstrated the wide seemingly never-ending multiplicity of forms of violence against women. Included in the CPI were reports of mass sterilization of low-income women, rape of Amerindian women, harassment within the military police, violence against domestic workers in the home, humiliating forms of industrial harassment, requirements for pregnancy tests and pressure to have an abortion by industries, production of videos and catalogs for sex tourism, police violence in the rural areas, slave work of women in rural areas where only men receive work documents and payment, unequal pay for the same work, racial

[11] See Eluf 1994 for a lively discussion of anachronistic and discriminatory crimes; see also Cfemea 1993 for a list of non-discriminatory legislative proposals. The new Civil Code scheduled for 2003 will correct many of these anachronisms.

discrimination, infant prostitution, and exploitation of Brazilian women living abroad (Câmera 1993).

Although the CPI supplied new data for mapping the condition of women, it was severely flawed in terms of methodology (Saffioti 1994). Also some reports were censured from the final document. For instance, the forced slavery and prostitution of girls from 9 to 20, purchased from the parents and flown to isolated places in the Amazon where they are forced to serve as prostitutes, are tortured and battered with no place but the forest to flee, was first brought to light by the journalist, Gilberto Dimenstein (1993) who also accused a well-known businessman and owner of a successful branch of private schools (Colégio Objetivo) of enticing young girls into prostitution. However, the final report submitted in December of 1993 excluded the name and included only a generic denouncement of these crimes, despite the protest of the president of the CPI, federal congresswoman, Sandra Starling, of the Worker's Party (União 1995). Due to her protests other contributors to the document refused to sign and it was ultimately emitted without signatures and the 28 proposal made by the commission to deal with the problem of violence against women were not submitted (Teles 1994).

Despite its flaws, the CPI produced statistics and confirmed what feminists had been attempting to prove in regards to some common myths. The CPI showed for instance that violence was not limited to the lower-class or to a certain ethnic group; that the domestic sphere, rather than being a haven from outside threats, was the most dangerous space for women; that attempts to characterize the abuser according to race, class, personality, employment, and so on are inaccurate. Unfortunately, the CPI did not receive the media coverage that women had hoped for since the CPI against a government official, P.C. Farias, was made public at the same time and resulted in the impeachment of President Collor (Teles 1994). Despite the work of Dimenstein (1993) and Simonian (1994) who signaled a rise in violence against Amerindian women, there has been little academic or political discussion concerning violence against Amerindian women. Also, violence against the elderly, disabled and homosexuals has not become a discursive issue within the larger publics (Grossi1994b).

Thus women activists through vigilant lobbying have been able to achieve State recognition of a wide spectrum of violence against women. The continued lobbying efforts of

feminist non-governmental groups has resulted in the slow but steady adoption of laws directed at gender-specific needs (see Cfemea 1993 for a more complete list of proposals).

Another important factor has been the operationalization of law-enforcement. Given the advances made in the Constitution, it appears to be just a matter of time before legislative reform follows, but exactly how these laws will be interpreted or if they will be largely ignored remains a question. Women activists have found that even with the Constitution and laws on their side, judicial attitudes have set up barriers to the establishment of legal practices that would benefit women.

The Judicial Branch

Besides working with the legislature, women have also seen the need to educate those acting within the judicial branch, such as judges and public attorneys. For instance, the attitude that the private sphere belongs essentially to the man is the basis for a judgement handed down in 1990 in the case of a mother who tried to defend her daughter from the aggressions of her husband. The judge justified the absolution of the husband as follows:

> Having the accused acted in the strict fulfillment of a responsibility, that is, to avoid that strangers perturb conjugal harmony, it would be imprudent to judge the present penal action but rather absolve it... although in relation to mothers-in-law, one should hit with the most efficient contusive instrument, since they normally like to interfere in the life of the couple, the accused only inflicted some good kicks on the aforementioned person, because she, as is the custom of most mothers-in-law, meddled in affairs pertinent to the couple without being called (A Sentença 1990, p,65).

Obviously, the attitude of the judge in regards to women and male authority skewed his decision that resulted in exalting the aggressor and blaming the victim. The same situation has been played over and over again in cases of the honor defense. Although the honor defense has no real basis within Brazilian law, it has been and continues to be used successfully (America's Watch 1991).

In March of 1991 the *Superior Tribunal de Justiça* (Supreme Court) decided to annul the decision to absolve a worker who killed his wife and her lover based on the defense of honor. The sentence of the Tribunal states:

> In this type of crime, what is defended is not honor but self, defiance, and the pride of the master who sees his wife as his property. Honor is a personal value, which cannot be atoned for by the blood of the unfaithful wife (Decision of the Superior Tribunal of Justice, March 11, 1991).

This decision by the court was hailed as a turning point in Brazilian courts and described as "historic" in that it buried the thesis of legitimate defense of honor (Jornal do Brasil, March 18, 1991.) However, according to the Brazilian constitution, the jury is not required to change its decision even if it is contrary to the position of the Supreme Court. In this particular case, the man was retried and once again absolved from guilt based on the honor defense, ignoring the higher court ruling (STJ 11/03/1991).

In March of 1993, several women's groups organized the First National Conference of Popular Organizations Against Violence Against Women in Praia Grande, São Paulo attended by 75 groups, in which they launched a national campaign against the impunity given by the judicial branch to those who committed violent acts against women. The campaign borrowed from the initial "Silence is the accomplice of violence" campaign of *SOS-Mulher* in 1980 to form the slogan, "Impunity is the accomplice of violence" (Alvarez, S.E. 1994). The focus this time around was not on the silence of women but on the manner in which the State had been omissive, thus allowing for the perpetuation of violence against women. The campaign demanded that the processes against aggressors and murderers of women be rigorously and responsibly carried through (União 1995). Once again the organization of these groups was initiated by a catalytic event. The ex-boyfriend of a young woman student of architecture who was strangled to death in the city of Santos, São Paulo, was found guilty of the crime after a series of trials that ended in 1993. Although the aggressor was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years, he was allowed to continue to live in freedom. The case was made public through the efforts and significant financial investment of the family, who gained the support of the women's movement (União 1995).

The movement against impunity followed a number of court cases and organized demonstration during the trails in which women wore T-shirts with the slogan "Is the marriage certificate a death sentence?" Activists also pressured police to provide protection orders for women threatened by violence. The Union of Women of São Paulo in an attempt to gain public support and inform women of their rights, printed pamphlets on the history of the struggle against violence, the gains and losses of the movement, stories of true cases and definitions of sexual harassment, trafficking of women as well as information about what to do when raped or harassed, the articles in the constitution and municipal and state laws referring to women, and so on. (União 1995).

The problem of impunity follows the general tone of denouncement made throughout the country. Impunity occurs not only in reference to gender-specific crimes but also in relationship to all forms of crimes. I demonstrated earlier that police statistics show that only a small percentage of all cases are actually solved. Therefore, issues of injustice and impunity are not limited to the cases of violence against women but are general problems that affect the entire population.

Critique of the Councils

The State and National Councils have also received mixed reviews. If on the one hand, the councils brought to the national scenario the public debate about the rights of women and the question of equality, giving it legitimate visibility, on the other hand, their power of intervention was not able to permeate the structure of the State. Schumaher & Vargas (1993) reflect that the councils were punctual interventions and localized action that did not implant public policies for the general population of women.

Pinto (1994) discusses the political problems the groups of feminists had in Brazil and the dichotomy feminist-feminine. Despite the adoption of the line of Human Rights, the insertion of the discussion of gender within social policy and the strategy of establishing cooperative relationships with other secretaries, the National Council presented, for the most part, partial interests rather than general interests. The discussion about gender was not fully incorporated into other areas and the National Councils acted primarily in defending partial

feminist interests. For instance the feminist block did not sponsor any other amendment during the Constitutional Assembly that did not deal directly with gender-specific issues and consequently other entities did not sponsor the feminist proposals. Also the feminist block failed to support a popular amendment sponsored by associations of women in the peripheral neighborhoods which received the largest number of signatures of any other popular gender-related amendment. This proposal would have given retirement payment to housewives and, although controversial, had a definite appeal to poor women – as the number of signatures indicates (Pinto 1994).

This situation was the result of a feminism that was still grappling for its identity. As we mentioned above, women were dealing with the problems of inserting gender-related claims into the platforms of the political parties as an integral part of the proposal and not a simple addendum. On the other hand, women from the periphery were also dealing with general issues of daycare, water supply, city services and health posts. The autonomous women's movement and organizations were born out of the frustration of not having a platform to discuss gender-specific issues, of which violence against women had been one of the first topics. By the time of the Constitutional Assembly, feminists were still struggling to validate these particular issues and were hardly disposed to broadening their focus to include what they might have considered to be partisan issues. The failure of the women of the council to fully appreciate the interrelationship of class, race and gender limited their focus and support. Given this scenario, the councils– national, state and municipal – were criticized for losing their ties to the popular women's movement.

With the election of conservative administrations, the National and State councils were prey to partisan manipulation. Conservative women were appointed to the councils and resources and staff were reduced. During the Collar administration, for instance, most of the feminist members of the National Council resigned. Within the Brazilian interior, councils have been formed in states as a political strategy without the participation of the women's movement.(Viezzer 1989, p.84; Vinagre Silva 1992) As one representative to the State Council in Mato Grosso do Sul confided:

> Many of the things we receive in the *interior* are imports from São Paulo that do not reflect the feminist agenda. Women have been appointed who have nothing to do with the feminist movement, it is more of a political way of offering something to women without making any real concessions (personal communication July, 1997).

Infighting among council members, disagreements on what constitutes the council's role, authoritarian practices by council presidents and the distancing of the council from the grassroots movements have been cited as other factors for the political debilitation of the councils.[12]

Therefore, the vibrant activities of the 1980s were by the beginning of the 1990s becoming neutralized by stabilizing conservative state structures while anti-feminist forces were finding ways of co-opting feminist initiatives. Due to the ability of the State to incorporate and transform proposals, the councils and practical initiatives remain in a precarious situation, subject to administrative shifts.

By the late 1990s, the National Council for Human Rights, reactivated by President Fernardo Henrique Cardoso, once again took up the issue of violence against women. The list of priorities of the National Council in regards to violence includes proposals that incorporated the criticisms made of previous initiatives and the fulfillment of additional needs into the national plan. For example the council calls for the strengthening of existing programs such as the police stations; the coordination of ministries in relation to violence against women especially in the areas of health, education and culture; the creation of programs for legal, health and psychological assistance; the integration of the perspective of race within the policies and programs related to domestic and sexual violence; adoption of means to eliminate the traffic of women and combat sex tourism; reformulation of the legal code; development of research in the area of violence against women (CNDM 1996).

The National Program on Human Rights (Brasil 1996) has incorporated a number of the proposals of the National Council into the governmental project of enhancing women's rights. The National Program calls for the creation or fortification of special programs;

[12] See for instance Cfemea 1997, June, p. 10 which gives an example of the collective resignation of 10 of the 25 council members of the Women's Council in the Federal District. The council president was cited as being non-democratic, and removed from the social and women's movements. Interestingly enough, the report states that the only issue that the council had worked on previous to the resignations was violence against women.

training and sensitization programs for the police, public defenders, public ministers and those working within the judicial branch; legislation reform especially in regards to rape and sexual harassment; support for research on violence against women; and public campaigns and educational programs concerning domestic and sexual violence as well as the creation of assistance centers and shelters for women in situations of violence. Thus, on the federal level, the issue of violence against women has become an official project within the general program of human rights.

From the beginning, women have questioned the ability of the councils to represent all of women's concerns, and have perceived that they can be at best only partially effective. Second, because they are a part of the State structure they are prey to partisan politics and can be easily manipulated or deactivated. Thus far, the councils have been as effective as the existing governments (be they municipal, state or federal) allow them to be, although pressure from non-governmental women's organizations (both national and international) has been instrumental in persuading governments to prioritize women's concerns.

The Contribution of Non-governmental Agencies

Yet another response to the problems women have had with the State apparatus has been the proliferation of non-governmental agencies, sponsored in large part by resources from foreign groups. I have already mentioned some of the agencies that have focused their energies on lobbying and monitoring the formation of laws such as Cfemea and Cepia. NGOs usually direct their work towards a particular issue in regards to women – worker's rights, health, racial discrimination, sexual orientation, youth – although they have often worked in conjunction with one another on particular issues. Free from the limits imposed by the State, the NGOs represent the most "radical" aspects of the feminist movement and through their work and research, the issue of violence continues to gain in complexity. In the 1990s non-governmental groups sponsored a number of conferences dealing with the issue of violence in an attempt to build networks and exchange ideas. [13]

[13] For example: The First National Encounter of Popular Entities that work in the area of violence against women was held on March 1993 in Praia Grande, São Paulo under the theme "For women's citizenship (*cidadania*) and human rights" The Second National Encounter of Popular entities was held in May 1997 in

Usually non-governmental agencies deal with the area of violence against women from a particular perspective. The Black women's movement during the 1990s was marked by an increase in non-governmental agencies working on issues of racism and sexism and in the organization of national and international conferences. During the Feminist Encounter of Latin-America and the Caribbean, black women met to structure a Network of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latinamerican women (see Geledés 1995 for a listing of conferences). The *Casa de Cultura de Cultura da Mulher Negra* (Black Women's Culture House) was inaugurated in 1990 in Santos, São Paulo and has offered the following projects: legal assistance to men, women and children in cases of racism and domestic and sexual violence; psychological counseling; publications, encounters and conferences; networking between groups in Latin-America (Casa de Cultura 2001).

The *Coletivo de Feministas Lésbicas* (Lesbian Feminist Collective) was founded in 1990 to politicize the needs of lesbians and work against forms of discrimination and violence directed against lesbians, while defending freedom of sexual orientation as a human right. The Collective offers legal services and has developed an AIDS/STD project for penitentiaries. According to an interview by Cfemea with one of the Collective members (Cfemea 2001) the incorporation of lesbian needs within the feminist movement has been insufficient and circumstantial. In general, the needs of lesbians has remained invisible and silenced within the general public discussions and within feminist groups.

The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents has become a public issue of discussion primarily through the work of NGOs. The *Rede Mulher de Educação* (Women's Network of Education) prepared a Dossier on Violence on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents according to the regional socio-economic reality of Brazil in 1999. Their study supports our previous perspective that regional differences result in various forms of violence. Their findings according to region are cited below:

Santos, São Paulo with the theme, "Violence against women; a question of Public Health." The National Seminar on "Health, Women and Intrafamilial Violence" was held in June 1999 (Casa da Cultura 2001*)*

Northern region – within the mining industry some of the most violent forms of violence have been found including private prisons, the sale and traffic of children and adolescents; auctions of virgin girls; mutilations, disappearances, national and international sex tourism.
Central West – there is a network of brothels and auctions of virgins along the drug traffic routes and on the international borders.
South – the predominate form of exploitation is of street boys and girls; prostitution of youth along the main highways and drug traffic routes; trafficking of children.
Northwest – the prevalent form of exploitation is through sex tourism with an organized network including national and international tourist agencies; hotels, taxi companies, the pornography industry, and the international trafficking of youth. A recent phenomenon is the decentralization of child prostitution from the coast to the interior regions.
Southeast – porn-tourism is most accentuated together with the commercial sexual exploitation of street children along the highways and in brothels where private prisons have been utilized (Rede Mulher 1999).

In recent years the increase in sex tourism and mail-order brides has been made public by the work of journalists working alone and by NGOs working directly with women. In this case, the NGOs such as *Coletivo Mulher Viva* in Olinda, Pernambuco have developed cooperative links with NGOs such as Agisra, Hydra, and Imbradiva in foreign countries. The trafficking of women and youth has created a situation which brings the issues of violence in the private sphere full circle with third world stereotypes and international economic inequalities. In the report of the *União de Mulheres* trafficking of women is positioned within the process of globalization in which people from the "South" are enticed to move to the "North" in search of economic opportunities.

Women drawn by the hopes of a more affluent life in "first world" countries have been willing to "sell" themselves as "exotic and erotic" brides or girlfriends. Others have unwittingly responded to job advertisement in which the actual working conditions are not clearly stipulated while others are made to believe that they will be working in other jobs, only to be forced into prostitution once they arrive in Europe. If these women have been devoid of their civil rights within their own country of Brazil, their awareness of rights within a foreign country is even more exacerbated since they do not speak the language, are isolated from family or friends and are confronted by racist and ethnocentric stereotypes. This produces a situation where Brazilian women are in situations of violence not only due to their

gender relationship with a particular man but also due to international racist and ethnocentric attitudes and international economic inequalities. (personal communication with members of Imbradiva; Agisra 1996) Groups such as Imbradiva, Hydra and Agisra, all located within Germany have provided direct services for foreign women and have worked towards changes in public attitudes and policies.

The examples cited above are but a small sampling of the NGOs working against violence in Brazil. It is beyond the limits of this study to make an empirical analysis of the NGOs working with the issue of violence since their proliferation in the last few years has been overwhelming. Rather, I am interested in analyzing their significance within the women's movement against violence. By focusing on certain areas and usually within a limited geographic location, NGOs have been important in identifying specific forms of violence against women, of bringing these forms to public attention locally, nationally and internationally, of presenting proposals for public policy and of developing practices for working directly with women.

Women working against violence have come up against the inefficiency of the State, its bureaucratic structure and generalized corruption, as well as ideological battles and political games among women working in governmental positions, which have caused severe problems in defining and implementing programs. Funding has been approved but deflected to other programs, hard won battles for councils and feminist representation have resulted in the substitution of women activists for conservative women. Despite progressive legislature, municipal fiscal difficulties are responsible for the cutting of funds to approved women's projects. Therefore, non-governmental agencies have filled the void and have been able to provide services and develop political agendas free from the restraints of the State. Most of the NGOs receive funding from foreign or international organizations, and therefore, are not dependent on bureaucratic and often vacillating State funding channels. The option of autonomous activism independent of the State has attracted ex-militants and academics, many of whom were frustrated with the councils and other State entities.

However, the rapid increase in NGOs has evoked a number of questions: Has the movement fragmented into scattered issue-oriented NGOs? What is or should be the relationship between NGOs and the popular movements? Can the NGOs represent women's

groups or movements and if so, what should the criteria be for representation? Who has the information and contacts for funding sources? (Schumaher & Vargas 1993). Moreover, with the increase in NGOs, what has become the role of the State in relationship to social issues? Due to the fact that the left had a socialistic agenda, many progressive movements set the primary responsibility on the State for the allocation of resources and programs to meet the needs of the population. Women have pondered if these non-governmental agencies are not taking the responsibility away from the State, or providing an alibi by which the State can wash its hands. This debate is evident not only within the women's movement but also in other discussions concerning private social action and the State.

Theoretical Considerations from the Academic Experts

The theoretical work concerning violence against women has often been carried out in conjunction with practice. As noted above, women working within the municipal centers such as *Casa Eliane Grammont* and *Casa Viva Maria* have made important theoretical contributions and numerous non-governmental agencies have prioritized research. Thus most of the experts in regards to violence against women have direct ties with practical initiatives. However, the academy traditionally and currently has provided needed space for theoretical considerations.

Although during the military dictatorship, the academy provided a safe place for feminist production, such work was and still is considered secondary and does not carry the same status as other areas of study. The opening of women's study centers within the universities which occurred in the 1970s within the United States did not occur in Brazil until the late 1980s and into the 1990s (Saffioti 1987). These centers have contributed to the advancement of the women's movement in that they have explored questions concerning gender and capitalism, the diverse situations of Brazilian women, and have discussed the various levels and facets of female oppression and exploitation in Brazil. These studies have been used as instruments in the struggle for women's rights in that they have investigated and analyzed questions concerning domestic violence, women's health, reproductive health, and women's labor (Costa & Sardenberg 1994).

During the 1st National Encounter of Women Study Centers in 1991 the concept of gender within a relational perspective was brought out as a fundamental category in the analysis of women in society. Gender provided the possibility and challenge of broadening the studies of women to include and incorporate other areas of studies (Costa & Sardenberg 1994). The concept of 'woman' as a social construct had existed for many years but many theoretical problems involving the origins of female oppression or its relationship to other forms of oppression such as capitalism persisted. The concept of gender was first developed in the Brazilian context within the areas of anthropology and psychoanalysis but has recently been incorporated into practically the entire constellation of feminist thinking and reflection. Gender is perceived as a construct within each social sphere and practice and can be used to analyze individual relationships as well as societal structures (Faria & Nobre 1997).

The attempt to understand female oppression as a result of male domination has been criticized as pitting all women against all men, vilifying men, turning women into victims and universalizing the experience of women as a group. Perhaps because the numerous types of violence that women have identified within Brazil are wrapped so closely together with more general issues, women have had difficulty in separating men from these struggles. For instance, one cannot talk of violence against Afro-Brazilian women without including the more general issue of racism nor can one talk of violence against rural women workers without taking up the global issue of agrarian reform. One cannot even discuss the impunity of men accused of murdering, battering or raping women without discussing the problems of police inefficiency, generalized impunity and corruption.

Especially women within the Black movement have perceived the problem of defining violence only in terms of "male violence against women." States Sueli Carneiro:

> The concept of violence against women lacks depth since it attempts, on the one hand, to establish a specific area that covers gender violence and, on the other hand, to attend to the multiple identities that make up the cross-section of Brazilian women that result in forms of violence and discrimination that go beyond the vision of violence against women based solely in its dimension as a product of asymmetrical societal relations between men and women. (Report on the Violence against Women Seminar for the Evaluation of the Decade of Women sponsored by Itamaraty, in Geledés 1995)

The study of gender allows for a relational analysis of men and women and how gender affects their interaction, how roles may vary according to social status, class or race, and how gender contributes to the development of other constructs such as private and public, reproduction and production. SOF analyzes the various contributions of the concept of gender:

1. Affirming that gender as a social construct means that sexual roles and identity are not biological facts but rather historical constructions that can be modified. There exists not only an ideological but also material basis for the construction of gender that is expressed in the sexual division of labor.
2. The concept of gender brings us to the notion of social practices and how these differ according to sex. While individuals are affected by these social practices, they also act on these relations and construct their lives collectively and individually through these social practices.
3. Gender relations have a hierarchical structure which gives men power over women. These power relationships determine how people in the society see and interpret their world and are consequently reproduced in the relationships between individuals and groups and within societal institutions. In order to modify this power relationship it is, therefore, necessary to construct a new constellation of forces which will be more favorable towards women and which can be achieved through the self-organization of women.
4. Relationships of gender are present in all aspects of society, which means that women's issues are not separate from societal issues at large. Within the spheres of work, politics, culture, etc. men and women organize themselves according to sexual roles. Therefore, there cannot be a large general struggle for equality and freedom and then a more specific struggle for women's rights. Rather, in all situations where modifications are being made, the inequality between men and women must be considered.
5. Gender transcends the old dichotomies of production and reproduction, public and private and demonstrates that men and women are present in all spheres and relate according to their sexual roles. Each is assigned specific tasks, which could be interpreted, for example, as productive or reproductive depending on the gender classification.
6. The analysis of gender relationships is only possible when taking into consideration the entire condition of persons. Class, race, age, urban or rural living, historic period and so on affect the construction of gender roles. Although there are many common elements in the experience and condition of being a woman, there are different demands and expectations made of women in relation to other social roles. For example how a rich white woman is taught to exercise her feminine role is quite different from a poor black

woman in relation to what type of wife each one should be, their tasks as mothers, how they should take care of their body and appearance, etc.

7. The study of gender can be useful in demonstrating what women have in common and also how each woman individually lives out this condition. It explains how both men and women incorporate masculine and feminine characteristics, how this may differ according to the particular situation of each, and how the expectations of masculine or feminine characteristics vary. For instance, women in leadership positions might be expected to demonstrate masculine characteristics (Faria & Nobre, M, 1997 pp. 31-33).[14]

Several feminist organizations have published pamphlets and popular material for reflection on the significance and meaning of gender in which the idealized sexual roles are put into question and identified as social constructs rather than biological determinants. On June 7, 1994, the governor of the state of Sao Paulo signed a resolution (Resolution SE-99) which instituted the politics of gender within the educational system of Sao Paulo and created a work group made up of representatives from the State Council on the Feminine Condition and all the state organs of education. By using information and studies on the international level, the group has developed methods for teachers to evaluate didactic materials and produced material to educate teachers on the ways in which stereotypes, prejudices and sexism affects the differentiated education of boys and girls (CECF 1994).

The study and incorporation of gender is obviously not unique to the Brazilian context. On the contrary, gender study programs abound worldwide and the international agreements are riddled with reference to 'gender.' However, what is interesting within the Brazilian context is that women, especially activists, have seen the reflection on gender as a step in the direction of developing a methodology and language that would permit the inclusion of men in the discussion. Women involved in the movements insist that the issues of gender should focus not only on differences but also inequalities between men and women, which would involve affirmative action and development of self-esteem and citizenship in women and the understanding on the part of men that these changes are important. The gender paradigm also allows for the integrated study of other contingencies such as race, sexual orientation, class and so on.

[14] For more on the discussion of gender and how it relates to the Brazilian context see: Heilborn. 1992; 1993; CECF 1994; Saffioti & Almeida 1995

Thus, the conceptualization of violence against women has passed through several phases within the Brazilian context. In the first phase, women were considered victims of male violence and as Gregori illustrated, this produced a dichotomy in which men were positioned as the primary cause of violence. Academic theorizing as well as practical experiences caused women to question the use of the term 'victim' and opt for the expression 'women in situations of violence,' which was less defining, and carried with it a kernel of hope for change. The reflections on gender allowed for the inclusion of men within the discussions and widened the concept of violence to include the consideration of the gender specific aspects of the various locations that women occupy.

For as useful as the concept of gender seems to be for the Brazilian situation, there have also been ambiguities. The use of the term 'gender violence,' for instance, once again hides women from the formula as did 'family violence,' 'oppression of the masses' and so on. Part of the struggle against violence had been to identify the particularities and types of violence as they are directed against women. Thus, although widely used and discussed, the concept of gender needs continued clarification. States Costa and Sardenberg (1994):

> The 'academics' in giving importance to the concept of gender, threw it out into the streets before they assimilated or turned it into a more comprehensible form for a significant portion of the women's movement. Immediately the category gender began to configure in all instances of the movement substituting the word women purely and simply...The demands of the popular movements and even the feminist movements followed the same practice. Once more, women became invisible (p.395).

Besides attempting to work out the various contours of the gender paradigm, academics have also dedicated considerable effort to empirical studies on violence, political analysis of legal procedures and laws, and the voicing of the conditions of previously underrepresented women (in the Amazon, prostitutes, etc) in the discussion of violence.

International Networking and Conventions

During the 1990s Brazilian women participated with women of other countries to draft documents that would demand that the needs of women be incorporated into the laws,

policies and practices of governments throughout the world. These documents have been systematically cited by Brazilian women as justification for changes in legislation and for the installation of programs for women. What follows is a discussion of a few of the most cited international documents.

The Brazilian government signed The Declaration of the UN World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993) which states: "The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights." Although the Brazilian government lodged reservations to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1984, those reservations were withdrawn in 1994.

The Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women of the Organization of American States was held on June 6, 1994 in Belém do Pará, Brazil. At the convention, a document was written which defined violence against women as "whatever action or conduct based on gender that causes death, injury or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, within the public as well as private sphere." This definition was followed by a list of protected rights, the responsibilities of the States, and the Inter-American mechanisms of protection. According to the women's groups who participated in the convention and who have helped to articulate the results, what is of interest in this document is that it introduces some important concepts to the discussion of violence against women: violence against women is considered to be a violation of *human rights*; the category 'gender' is employed; the notion of the right to a life without violence is conceived; besides physical violence, sexual and psychological violence are given visibility; and both the private and public sphere (including residence, community and State) are considered to be spaces where violence against women occurs. The convention was ratified by the Brazilian government in 1995 and is considered by women's organizations to be an instrument whereby they can pressure the State to develop policies against violence against women and promote the defense of human rights (Organização dos Estados Americanos 1996). For example, on November 1996, women from the *União de Mulheres de São Paulo* (Union of São Paulo Women) and CLADEM – *Comitê Latino-Americano e do Caribe para a Defesa dos Direitos das Mulheres* (Latin-American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of

Women's Rights) presented to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights based in Washington D.C. the first two international denouncements of the rights of women based on the Convention of Belém do Pará. The cases involved the dramatic unpunished murder of two Brazilian women. According to the two organizations that presented the denouncement, although the Brazilian government did not recognize the court, the act of presenting these violations to the international community imposed political and moral condemnation on the Brazailian State for not securing the rights of women (Piovesan 1997).[15]

The Third International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1995 resulted in a document that advocates the "elimination of all practices that discriminate against women" and obligates nations "to eliminate all forms of exploitation, abuse, harassment, and violence against women, adolescents and girls" (FNUAP 1995, p. 12). The document discusses the need to improve the situation of women in regards to the family, work, health, urbanization and migration, and education. It also discusses the particular situation of adolescents and girls, the elderly, migrants and refugees, aboriginal populations and the disabled. Therefore, it acknowledges the multiple variables in the lives of women and proposes policies in accord with these distinct situations.

Interesting for our discussion concerning the role of the State and the NGOs, chapter XV of the Cairo conference document encourages partnerships between the government and non-governmental agencies, local community groups and the private sector. It sees the role of these non-governmental groups as facilitating the search for solutions, the elaboration of programs and the implementation of policies. It recommends that the State and the governments, which offer financial assistance, guarantee the autonomy of non-governmental groups while they reinforce the capacity of the groups through dialogue and consultation. In terms of the private sector, the document emphasizes the importance of the role of the private sector in providing goods and services for programs relevant to the implementation of policies regarding population and development. Therefore, it strongly suggests that partnerships with the private sector be developed by governments and international

[15] In 1996 the Brazilian government had not recognized the Inter-American Court of Human Rights installed in 1969 by the American Convention of Human Rights (also known as the Pact of San José) that would judge violations against the convention. Since that time various human rights groups mobilized a national campaign

organizations to identify new areas of cooperation and guarantee the distribution and quality of goods and services. The private sector should also search for ways to help non-governmental agencies either financially or through other types of support (FNUAP1995). Thus, the representatives present at the Cairo conference were conscious of the need for cooperation between various levels of action – private and public, commercial and nonprofit – and realized that although the State is of key importance in the elaboration and implementation of the proposals written in the document, it is not the only player.

The Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women's Rights (Beijing 1995) declares that the State should prevent, investigate and punish those acts of violence against women committed by the State or by individuals; take the necessary means within education to modify the behavior models of men and women, eliminate sexual harassment and other practices and attitudes based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of one of the sexes, guarantee sufficient State resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, introduce penal, civil, labor and administrative sanctions to punish aggressors and provide restitution for damages caused to women and girls by violence at home, at the workplace, in the community or society, review legislation periodically to assure efficiency and prevention in regards to violence against women, adopt means to eliminate violence against women especially for those most vulnerable such as youth, refugees, women with special needs and migrant workers.

Before the conference, Brazilian women activists used the general atmosphere of anticipation for the conference to hold preparatory encounters, seminars and meetings, publish articles and utilize media coverage to present their set of concerns from the Brazilian context (*Presença da Mulher* 1995, March). After the conference women have again used the media to present their perspectives on the conference and place demands on governmental policies (*Presença da Mulher* 1995, November). The State Council of the Feminine Condition in São Paulo, for example, promoted the writing of a São Paulo State Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1992 based on the Inter-American conference (CECF & Governo 1992). And finally women have pressured the

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for Brazil to recognize the court. The court was recognized on Dec. 3 1998 by the Brazilian government (Piovesan 1999).

government to change legislation, approve funding, and develop policies based on the documents. From the Beijing conference emphasis on empowerment and women's participation within the government, Marta Suplicy, then federal senator (Worker's Party), presented and achieved approval of a legislative proposal that states that 20% of the candidates from each political party be women (Suplicy 1996).

Brazilian activists have also participated in regional international conferences and developed networks with women and groups from other countries. The Brazilian experience of Women's Police Stations has been articulated and installed in other countries following the Brazilian lead and Brazilian women have drafted legislation based on existing laws in other countries (Pavez 1997). Thus women within Brazil have incorporated the language of international conference documents based on notions of "human rights", and "empowerment" to make their case before the State and before the population. In this way they have instrumentalized universal claims for their particular and contextual needs.

Analysis of the 1990s

In the 1980s women organized to make the issue of violence against women a legitimate public concern and enshrine it within the constitution. Having met these demands, women in the 1990s worked from within the State or in non-governmental lobbying groups in order to create or modify existing laws, demand changes in the posture of the judiciary branch and secure public funding for public services such as shelters, police stations, legal, psychological and health services. Although mass mobilizations were organized against impunity, the principle strategies used were political lobbying and negotiating and the development of coalitions by expert women versed in juridical language. On the ground level where services were being offered, the primary articulations were being developed by professionals – be they social workers, psychologists, physical education students or police women. Also within the non-governmental organizations, articulate and formally educated women were defining violence as it pertained to women within particular contexts and they were going to international conferences and drafting documents to be signed by the State. Within university women study programs, women were writing masters and doctorate dissertations on gender

theory, violence, Brazilian racism and so on. Thus, the 1990s appears to be a decade of expert discourses.

These discourses were not, however, unified into a singular movement. Primarily through the proliferation of non-governmental agencies, women were showing that violence against women was not limited to conjugal violence and could be identified beyond the domestic sphere. The São Paulo State Council on the Feminine Condition makes an attempt to categorize the specific forms of violence against women:

> in the context of public institutions: disrespect of legislation which recognizes the rights of women to equality; exclusion of women from positions of decision and authority; police violence, abuse of authority, sexual aggression, violence against health (inadequate and/or nonexistent health services, forced sterilization, abusive gynecological manipulation; induced or imposed fertility control);
> in the context of the society: sexual aggression (sexual molestation, intimidation, abuse of authority; work exploitation), making of feminine work ghettos; inferior salaries as compared to men's, lack of salaries for services rendered, illegal demands for admission to and/or permanence of employment; commercialized violence (trafficking of women, dishonest labor recruitment); physical aggression (battering); sexual violence (rape);
> in the context of the means of communication: exploitation of the woman's image; devaluation and fixation of sexual stereotypes; commercialization of the feminine body;
> in the context of the family: physical violence (battering, homicide, and abortion); sexual abuse (rape, incest); emotional abuse (confinement, domination, forced/induced marriage, daily belittlement; discriminatory education.) (Report on the São Paulo Convention about the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against the Woman, March, 1992, p. 52)

Fragmentation could therefore be understood as a necessary strategy in the movement against violence, since particular attention to specific situations of women were needed to

understand the multiplicity of violence. It was as if the movement outgrew itself and therefore divided into separate units, although these units have been in dialogue with one another through conferences, publications and cooperative activities.

Women have also identified some of the discourses and practices that have hindered their work. The securing of Municipal, State and Federal Councils has produced advances in the struggle against violence against women as well as setbacks. The creation of the councils were able to attract public attention and give public legitimacy to women's issues as well as to facilitate the installation of public policies in favor of women, however, the absorption of women's issues into the State apparatus has served to neutralize women's power through such strategies as stalling, misdirecting of legislated funds, incompetence, inefficiency and so on. The State still maintains its authoritarian and patriarchal roots and although women's groups and councils have been able to make some changes within the State, they remain as separate almost outside entities. Women's concerns are far from becoming an integral issue of State politics and therefore, while women have used the State they have had to be careful that other forces within the State do not appropriate their spaces and discourses for opposing purposes.

The Church continues to be an ambiguous space for women. While having offered the conditions for women's early mobilization, and while the progressive arm of the church continues to work on issues related to agrarian reform and conditions of street children, women have noted the immobility of the church in relation to women's sexuality, abortion and contraceptives.

In response to the neutralizing efforts by sections of the State apparatus and the Church, women have reverted to international pressures using the idiom of Human Rights. In the writing of international documents and in the developing of networks, women have instrumentalized the idiom of Human Rights to gain leverage within their country for laws and policies supporting the needs of women.

Partisan politics through the Worker's Party in the 1990s became an important vehicle for the implementation of policies regarding women. Despite the problems of the 1980s regarding women's autonomy versus general issues and party politics, those women who chose to fight it out within the Worker's Party were successful in creating a political

movement within the party which was sympathetic to women's concerns. The election of women within the worker's party – Benedita da Silva (federal senator Rio de Janeiro) Luiza Erudina (mayor of São Paulo), and Marta Suplicy (federal senator and current mayor of São Paulo) are some of the most famous examples – gave credibility to the claim that women (also black low-income women in the case of Benedita) are capable of governing and greatly stimulated the work of women activists in infiltrating the State.

Finally, women activists have pondered what it is that women in situations of violence really want. Gregori's use of the term "accomplice" while controversial definitely opened channels for the discussion of women's interaction with men. Although feminists have dedicated considerable work to constitutional amendments, legislation and specialized police stations for women, it appears that women in situations of violence are not always willing to take the route offered by the criminal justice system. Most women simply want the violence to stop and are in search of non-legal means of doing this, thus, for example, they demand of policewomen behaviors that extrapolate their officially defined roles.

While legislation and public policies are of key importance, cultural norms, attitudes and behaviors appear to be changing more slowly. The police, feminist activists and women in situations of violence have noted the general culture of tolerance towards domestic violence, which has allowed for such abuse to go unpunished or has given tacit approval. Educational projects, conferences and public discussions, professional training programs and advertising campaigns have been included in the in-order-to chains as means to alter cultural attitudes concerning violence and 'break the silence.' The link between violence against women as a criminal and cultural issue was clearly made by Dorrit Harazim in a *Veja* (1998) magazine in which the cover issue is domestic violence. After citing statistics on domestic violence, including interviews with battered women and women police chiefs, Dorrit concludes:

> As long as the doctor does not denounce suspect wounds, as long as the teacher does not observe signs of alert in a child, the priest, rabbi, pastor or mãe-de-santo [reference to Candomblé religion] do not regularly condemn domestic violence, and the society as a whole does not recognize it as a problem, then there is no women's police station that can solve the problem.(...)who ends this brutality in the home is not the police, its us (p.87).

While Brazilian women can boast beautiful constitutional amendments, women's police stations and international agreements, they have perceived that other "dominant sources of legitimacy in society lie elsewhere."

Into the 21st Century – the Idiom of *Cidadania*

Currently, the issue of violence against women does not enjoy the media coverage it initially received in the 1980s nor is it a principle issue of public debate. No longer can women activists speak of the women's movement in the singular or even of women's political mobilization. Strategies have changed and the "movements" have dispersed. What one notices in Brazil is the fragmentation of the movements into smaller localized centers of action and research which become points of public discussion only at punctual intervals when circumstances permit.

Idioms have also been modified. While the concept of human rights continues to be used as the primary idiom for the development of nondiscriminatory policies and has seemingly universal appeal such as in the Latin American and Caribbean campaign "Without women, rights are not human" the concept of *cidadania* (citizenship) – perhaps best translated as civil rights and responsibilities – reflects the contextual situation of a country attempting to develop a civil society. The development of *cidadania* has been exemplified not only in the writing and approval of constitutional articles and laws, but also as cultural phenomena in which people become conscious of their civil rights and responsibilities and become active participants in civil society. Therefore, the concept of *cidadania* within the Brazilian context is the construction of the "social" as defined in Nancy Fraser's model and the provision of necessary structures for the full participation of all members of the society.

For women, the struggle for full *cidadania* encompasses the elimination of discriminatory policies and practices in regards to their multiple levels of identity and social conditions. Thus, black women groups use the term *cidadania* to proclaim their particular needs within a racist and sexist society while rural workers articulate *cidadania* in respect to collective ownership of land. A little different than the idea of civil rights the concept of *cidadania* also includes the social aspect of responsibility. Therefore, groups have called for

individuals and the profit sector to exercise their *cidadania* by supporting schools, charitable organizations or the work of NGOs. Most importantly perhaps, *cidadania* implies a change in attitude and in the way people interact with one another and with State institutions.

After looking through the list of gains women activists have made since 1984, one cannot but be impressed with their successes. I have attempted to show how Brazilian women acted and reacted towards the political, economic and social changes within their country and internationally and how the concept of violence against women evolved from this context. I have also given examples of the numerous strategies they have employed at the community, municipal, state and federal level, within and outside the government, as individuals and as groups to meet the needs of women in their varied situations of violence. But despite their monumental gains within the federal constitution and legislation, within the police structures and at the municipal and state level, it has become more than clear that violence against women continues to occur, rights are infringed and policies fall short. The general underlying idea of *cidadania* is that laws and services do little good if people are not aware of their rights or are not considered as full-fledged citizens. Barsted (1994a) calls our attention to the particularities of the Brazilian context in regards to citizenship.

> As in all modern societies, there exists in Brazil a distance between the ideal of citizenship and economic, social and political practices. The specificity of the Brazilian situation in respect to this distance resides, perhaps, not in the contradiction between formal democracy and anti-democratic practices but in the relative harmonious cohabitation of both (Barsted 1994a p. 38).

Thus the lack of a democratic political culture among the larger population coupled with the problems related to an unstable economy, corruption and increased differences in income limits the installation of feminist proposals for citizenship within the Brazil context.

In response to this dilemma, Pinto (1994) argues that initially feminists had to work as oppositional groups working from the exterior position and adopting the position of "other." This strategy was without a doubt successful in bringing important claims to the social arena, securing a number of State programs and stamping feminist initials into the constitution. However, Pinto questions whether the feminist or women's movement can continue indefinitely to pressure the State to follow through with proposals or adopt new initiatives.

She calls for feminists to broaden their base by including *general* issues relevant to the entire population rather than maintaining a narrower focus on specific feminist-defined needs even if this means that the feminist and women's movements would lose a degree of autonomy and identity. Without rupturing its condition of "exteriority" in relation to other social movements she does not see how the feminist movement could maintain the stamina to continue struggling for change.

Thus the initial issue of general issues versus autonomy has become a "false" question as women perceive that without the creation of "the social" or of a strong civil society, specific initiatives directed at women will remain precarious.

CHAPTER 5

THE BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AGAINST VIOLENCE WITHIN A DISCURSIVE INTERCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

> (...) *by travelling to their "world" we can understand* what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. *Only when we have travelled to each other's "world" are we fully subjects to each other.*
>
> María Lugones (1990)

In my analysis of violence against women, I have attempted to illustrate the multifarious nature of the issue by establishing it as particular and contextual as well as universal and international. I have shown that violence against women occurs in various forms and that these forms are related to the specific circumstances of the context and of the position of the woman within this context. Likewise, within this context, interpretations of violence vary in accord with the interpreter's social position, ideological perspective or area of expertise. However, upon careful examination of the situation, connections and interrelations arise that broaden the scope of the issue from the closed and particular to that of the intercultural and international. Thus, I hold that we must appreciate both the contextual contingencies as well as the intercultural ties in order to reach a deeper understanding of violence against women and, finally, to develop practical policies and interventions that would prevent violence.

Therefore, I began by establishing violence as a constructed concept dependent on social, political and cultural contingencies of a particular society that vary over time. To this end, I gave examples that demonstrate how the interpretation of violence had varied from historical period to historical period and from culture to culture. Even current interpretations of violence within the international literature are far from conclusive, and conflicting

analyses abound, often causing passionate disputes among researchers. Much of the analysis goes beyond personality characteristics of individuals to include cultural norms and the interrelationship with hierarchical forms of social organization, economic inequalities and intercultural and international contacts. Thus, violence has been construed in psychological, sociological, anthropological, political and economic terms, as inter-personal, interfamilial, and as a consequence of racism, homophobia, international militarization and imperialism.

Most researchers today allow for a multi-factorial understanding of violence against women, although 'third world' women and women of color within the United States, for example, have voiced concern over the reluctance of researchers to fully appreciate how interwoven racism and colonialism are with the problem of violence against women. They have signaled the need for complex and multi-faceted interpretations that include intercultural analysis while in practical terms they have seen that networking among women can be useful in developing a fuller understanding of the manifold locations that women occupy. I conclude that an intercultural communicative framework is needed to broaden our understanding of violence in order to incorporate the various situations and forms in which women experience it. This has prompted discussions concerning intercultural communication and learning and posed the question of how women can make exchanges that facilitate the participation of all groups and are free from dominant hierarchical structures despite current social and political asymmetrical power relations.

Using these discussions as a backdrop, the principal objective of this study has been to study the evolution of the concept of violence against women as it developed from the most recent movements against violence in Brazil. Besides offering a 'case example' I have also attempted to show how a seemingly culturally specific and even private 'domestic' problem and the consequent solutions developed could be seen in light of intercultural contacts and as international issues of concern that have affected men and women in other countries and have also resulted in the elaboration of international agreements. Therefore, I have not presented the Brazilian movement against violence as an isolated 'perspective' on violence; rather, I have attempted to focus on interconnections within a global context. Thus, one of my fundamental thesis has been that something as culturally specific as 'domestic' violence could have social, political, intercultural and international ramifications, and our

understanding and attempts to find solutions for violence against women will be limited if we do not take into consideration intercultural connections and develop ways to learn with the experience of others.

On the Application of the Discourse Model

In order to make sense of violence against women as a multi-factorial issue I have utilized Nancy Fraser's model of need interpretation. Although Fraser's model is based on her observations and analysis of a late capitalistic welfare state, I argued that her model has the internal flexibility to be adapted to the Brazilian case. By adopting her model for this study I have actually sought to do two things: I have made an analysis of the Brazilian movement against violence against women based on a political discursive model of need interpretation; I have expanded the model which could in turn respond to some of the specific questions that arise in the Brazilian context as well as uncover some legitimate areas of concern within late capitalistic welfare states.

In order to adequate Fraser's model for a study with intercultural pretensions, several adjustments must be made. By exemplifying some of the differences between the understanding and expectations in regards to the State in two countries that could be identified as late capitalistic welfare states – German and the United States – I sought to underscore the need for a contextual analysis. A contextual study would attempt to demonstrate how the concepts of her model such as 'private,' 'political,' 'state,' 'economic,' 'domestic,' 'interest groups' and so on could be understood within the Brazilian scenario. Aware that this context is also constructed, I have based my discussion on an extensive although partial analysis of discourses in and about Brazilian. I have included within the discursive model interest groups and State components that are necessary for understanding the Brazilian context and that could be helpful in uncovering unforeseen dynamics in late capitalistic welfare states. Therefore, I have sought to understand the State as a grouping of components rather than as a monolithic whole in order to better analyze the options available for social movements. Of these components, I have included the role of repressive State

forces as one of the multiple State entities that is often overlooked in 'western' analyses and I have included religious organizations as privatizing institutions.

Although international interests could be included as a principle interest group, intercultural communication goes beyond formal institutionalized channels to permeate cultural norms and practices. Thus, throughout my analysis, I have attempted to incorporate a generalized attitude towards the inclusion of intercultural interactions and discourses outlined by P.V. Dias as essential for understanding the internal inter-ethnic as well as external international dynamics of violence against women.

In chapter 3, I turned to discursive constructions of the Brazilian nation as they were articulated outside and inside Brazil. These constructions while contradictory and incomplete have shaped the contacts between Brazil and other nations, have molded race and ethnic relations, formed the Brazilian State structure along class lines, framed the interconnection between interest groups such as the elite, repressive forces and religious organizations and determined the various forms by which women experience violence. While this is a unique context, it also shares many of the features of a late-capitalistic welfare states. In using Fraser's model as a guide, I have attempted to show how these features have been understood with the Brazilian context.

However, I have not limited myself to the discursive model, but saw the need to integrate it into the wider perspective of intercultural communication and learning. In the construction of the Brazilian nation-state within a global context, the notion of 'Brazil' was accommodated into a grouping of categorical opposites that reflected not only the positioning of Brazil but the self-image of other countries. Rhetorical categories such as west versus east, occident versus orient, north versus south, developed versus underdeveloped, first-world versus third world have shaped European and North American versions of themselves and have projected stereotypical characteristics on to a complex multi-cultural nation such as Brazil. These categories have not only produced false imagery, but have resulted in international policies and practices that have hindered the full development of women. Experts have argued that these notions of inferiority and underdevelopment as well as economic contingencies and relations of dependence have led to imperialistic policies that augmented poverty in the third world, adversely affecting the lives of primarily women and

children while also supporting the installation of military regimes that restricted freedoms and brutally tortured, murdered and exiled citizens. In these cases, violence against women is viewed outside the 'domestic' realm as gender-specific ramifications of State violence, poverty and militarization.

The growth of international cooperative projects, the critique of dichotomous thinking by postmodernists and the advent of globalization have broken down bipolar interpretations, albeit in different ways. Postmodernists have demonstrated how the above 'we versus they' paradigms reduce the multiplicity of often entire continents to a single simplified category while globalization and the current search for international commercial agreements have blurred national borders and reshuffled relations of center and periphery. As old discursive paradigms lose their explanatory power, experts have been seeking to develop interpretations that could guide social movements. Nonetheless, the post-colonial position of Brazil has been an important factor in the development of the Brazilian women's movement against violence and other social movements. Likewise, the constructed understandings of Brazil have modified and influenced the politics and practices of other people, groups and countries. Therefore, I find that the interests and interconnections of international bodies must be clearly included within a model of interpretation.

Within my internal analysis of the Brazilian situation I have shown how various factors such as geographic location, class and race have contributed to producing multiple conditions for women. Considering geography, class and ethnicity to be contingent in the development of constructed identities I have outlined how these variables differ and interact.

Brazil has been described as a land of contrasts – with good reason. Sprawling over most of South America, the geographic terrain alone provides evidence for the postmodern critique of hegemonic categories. I have also shown how the constructed divide between coast and interior had until recently effectively silenced claims occurring away from the political and cultural core of São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro. Thus while the term 'Brazil' is used to refer to a singular geographic territory and political body, I have given evidence to argue that it can also be seen as a loose interaction of contrasting and dissimilar regions.

Although geographic divisions have contributed to diverse conditions for Brazilian women, class differences have produced blatant divisions comparable to that of few other

countries. Whether experts chose to interpret class differences as internal conflicts of interest or whether they view them as a result of imperialistic dominance by outside forces, the construction of class in Brazil has been historically entwined in the understanding of the evolution of the Brazilian state. It is also the point at which issues of racial identity, regional interests, and international influences merge.

In terms of formal structure, the State has gone through several metamorphoses: colony, monarchy, republic, populist dictatorship, populist democracy, military dictatorship, formal democracy. However, most experts agree that the State apparatus has rarely supported the interests of the general population. Despite the apparent changes in State structuring, private interests in the name of State policies have directed race relations, have occluded rural conflicts, have sheltered class interests and have restricted the role of women while international interests have imposed political and economic restrictions. Social movements by the middle of the 20th century were, therefore, articulating radical shifts in State organization such as revolution, armed conflict, socialist economic restructuring and nationalistic anti-imperialistic postures. With the military coup, these ideas were radicalized and the State was identified by political activists as the enemy.

Within the Brazilian context, there has never been a strong sense of the 'social arena', as it is defined by Fraser to denote the space where groups could articulate their interests and battle out the in-order-to chains with opposing groups. During colonial times, the monarchy and republic, Brazilian politics were governed internally by elite groups whose primary strategy was to hinder popular expression of needs. Later Populism purported to provide for the needs of the populace through paternalistic means rather than through democratic channels. Nonetheless, popular groups periodically forced their issues to the forefront of political discussion.

Within the recent military regime, most areas of political discussion were closed off. From this situation, the Catholic Church, although supporting the military with one hand, offered space for political resistance and community based organizing with the other. Union politics and later party politics also offered an arena for political discussions and actions. International human rights groups were instrumental in denouncing military abuses and providing the human rights idiom that would frame the articulations of resistance movements.

With the opening up of political liberties the number of social movements organized around specific issues greatly increased. Most of these movements disrupted once these particular needs were met, but others were able to form nationwide networks. The writing of the Brazilian Constitution provided yet another arena of discussion in which those groups that had formed identities and could demonstrate lobbying skills entered into the debates for the formulation of amendments that would speak to their cause.

Taking the opportunities identified with the State restructuring process, opposition groups viewed the State not as enemy but as a means to sanction their claims. Rather than opposing the State, they have sought to infiltrate it and transform it. One important exception to this is the Landless movement, which represents another axis of current oppositional organization by employing confrontational strategies against the State within the rural areas.

Therefore, throughout most of Brazilian history the 'social arena' has periodically emerged within particular spaces, the Church and neighborhood organizations, unions, the writing of the Constitution, through international organizations and so on. This is unlike the 'social' as described in Fraser, which makes up an integral part of state organizing and decision making in late capitalistic states, but is closer to her idea of multiple publics.

The current idiom of discussion in Brazil revolves around the construction of citizenship or *cidadania*, understood as social rights and responsibilities or – in reference to Fraser's model – the development of the social arena where civil society can act. Closely related to human rights this idiom is context specific and directs the work of building effective democratic State structures through the creation of the 'social'.

Together with my discussion on formal State structures, I identified two other groups as deserving of special attention: repressive State forces and the Catholic Church.

It would be difficult to overlook the influence of repressive forces in the analysis of recent Brazilian history. Although currently there appears to be little danger of a military coup, the effects of a repressive and ineffective police force have been highlighted within the reports of international human rights groups. Once again, this situation is not unique to Brazil. Some of the examples I cited were the effects of the authoritarian regimes during the 1930s and 1940s on the populations of Germany, Italy, and Japan which are still being weighed by social scientists. At this writing, the reaction of the United States military in the

face of ‘terrorist’ attacks and the consequences of their actions are of pivotal importance within the global context.

The multiplicity of religious organizations should be taken into consideration as important factors especially in the development of cultural practices and identity. However, the Catholic Church in Brazil, despite fragmentation continues to hold considerable symbolic power within the political realm. It has been instrumental in supporting military coups as well as organizing for their demise; it has supported the organization of women while disregarding their gender-specific needs; it remains unswerving in regards to homosexuality and contraception; but it has been a primary articulator for the rights of street children and the Landless. Thus social movement have had to wage their strategies either with or against the Church, since rarely has it been neutral. Other religious organizations such as Candomblé, the neo-Pentecostal churches, the traditional protestant Churches, Spiritism, Judiasm and Islam have offered in divergent ways spaces for identity formation, resistance, and discursive interpretations of social issues.

Also here we can establish an interesting connection between the discursive model for the interpretation of needs and the framework of intercultural communication, since this articulation between religion and women’s movements is not a situation particular to the Brazilian context. On the contrary, I have argued that in such seemingly secular States as the United States and Germany, religious organizations have been key players in interpreting needs and designing policies. Therefore, we do not have to look long or deep for examples of how repressive state forces and religious organizations have influenced events within late capitalistic welfare state. Including these components in an analysis of social movements would enrich our understanding of the dynamics in social and political disputes.

Beyond geographical divisions and formal State structures the concepts of race and ethnic differences in Brazil have produced an interaction of myths and practices that cannot be compared to racism in the United States or other colonized lands. The myth of the three races continues to be a prominent discourse that has effectively hidden racism under the guise of cordiality and tolerance. Rather than developing strict categories separating people according to ethnic and racial backgrounds, the Brazilian State encouraged the mixing of the races in order to achieve the goal of ‘whitening’ the population. Thus racism in Brazil

appears less direct and obvious, more ambiguous and casual, making racial identity and consequent political identity more difficult to define. In discussions of Brazilian racial identity, the creation of the '*mulata*' has been the result of racist concepts regarding Afro-Brazilian and Amerindian women within and outside of Brazil.

The ethnic diversity found in Brazil, which goes beyond the three arbitrary races cited above, has resulted in a wide array of cultural and religious practices. If this variety has been obscured by the hegemonic power of the Catholic church, the Brazilian people have not always adhered to the dogma of Rome, participating in a variety of practices as they saw fit. Thus Brazilian ethnic, racial or religious identity has been formed more by interaction than separation, by alteration rather than static doctrine where "identity (...) does not necessarily imply being 'one' inside." Therefore within our contextual analysis, diversity stands out as a major feature of the Brazilian context. However, this diversity must be understood it its hierarchical character for it has conditioned the relations women have with men, the State, repressive forces, the church, other women and so on.

Throughout this constructed history of Brazilian nation there are a number of issues to bear in mind. First the interconnection with international interest groups and intercultural contacts has been explicitly recognized since the first Portuguese arrived on the shores of what would become the Brazilian territory. The construction of Brazilian ethnic identities, the evolution of the State and the conditions made available for women have been shaped by international and intercultural interactions. I argue, therefore, that Fraser's model clearly include the positioning of Brazil within a global framework. Moreover, in previous chapters I have shown how women's condition and more specifically their experience of violence can be shaped by intercultural interconnections. Therefore, broadening Fraser's model to include a global context elucidates intercultural dynamics within postcolonial as well as late capitalistic welfare states.

Second, I have focused on how internal interactions and particular conditions among multiple geographic locations among ethnic groups, between the elite and the larger population, have produced unique situations that cannot be reduced to general categories. Within Brazil, for instance, one finds manifestations of racism that are particular to the Brazilian experience and geographic multiplicity which creates differing conditions within

the same nation. The personalistic style of interrelationships, which was used to control the private/political line, was based on parochial forms of interaction. The current construction of the 'social' is unique to the Brazilian context. These few examples taken from my discussion demonstrate that contextual peculiarities also formed the Brazilian political, social and cultural conditions whereby social groups can make claims. Therefore international and intercultural considerations as well as internal fine points are important factors in understanding any given context.

Third, within this scenario I have included special consideration for the components of the State, the military, and the role of the Church and other religious organizations which are obvious elements of analysis within the Brazilian context but also important factors in late capitalistic welfare States. Thus, our analysis of the Brazilian context brings to light components that could broaden our theoretical model.

On the Brazilian Women's Movement against Violence

From this contextual study I begin my analysis of the Brazilian women's movement against violence in chapter 4. Although Brazilian women struggled against violence since the colonial period, only recently has there been an organized movement of women against gender-specific violence. During the early part of the 20st century, women organized around issues particular to their class. Thus upper-class women organized for women's franchise still based on the literary requirement and higher education while lower-class women organized around labor issues. The discourse of the few women purporting sexual freedom and changes in gender-relations were effectively silenced. Women's articulations were shaped by the counter-discourses of the Catholic Church and the socialist leftist movement and the success of their efforts was determined primarily by the degree of access to democratic channels. That women were divided on their interpretation of feminism and developed mutually exclusive organizing strategies, which diminished their effectiveness in making social or political changes and facilitated the reinterpretation of their needs by other interest groups.

The new wave of women's organizing in the latter part of the 1900s was different in that there was a large popular base of women involved to differing degrees in political and

social groups. In the late 1960s through the organization of mother's clubs by the Catholic church and the organization of base communities that came out of the praxis inherent in Liberation theology, impoverished women began to get a taste of political work although they themselves might not have considered it as such.

Women, who were politically active, organized around general issues such as the high cost of living, amnesty for political exiles, or the need for nurseries. These women's movements gathered a large number of women from differing class and political affiliations and captured the attention of larger publics. Therefore, the generalized issue of 'women' became a legitimate area of public discourse such that other political groups were also noting the importance of women's participation and beginning to entice women into their campaigns by including at least some reference to women's needs. While some women interpreted this as rhetoric attempts by interest groups to co-opt their political strength without effectively dealing with their concerns, other women considered that the general issues of democratization, human rights and class struggle were of primary importance and argued that women's needs could be included in the generalized issues.

Divergences were made apparent in the way women named their movement: feminist; feminine; women's movement; or women in movement. Unlike the United States where liberal and radical feminism gained support, the most prominent type of feminism that arose in Brazil was socialist feminism coupled with activism. This was primarily due to the blatant class differences in Brazil and the strong organization of the left. However many women were reluctant to name themselves as feminist due to the disqualifying discourses of conservative and leftist groups who alluded to the 'radical' and 'separatist' claims of North American and European feminists.

Therefore, the recent feminist discussion on violence in Brazil arose from a context of a population divided by extreme differences in wealth that overshadowed discussions of race or gender, of a nation emerging from 20 years of dictatorship to define for itself the meaning of citizenship and human rights, where a strong labor movement dominated leftist politics, where the Catholic Church had been instrumental in providing space for women of the popular classes to organize around their domestic roles, and where international regulatory bodies influenced the economic and political direction of the country.

International influences were intricately interwoven into this context: the church-related 'aid for development,' projects which founded mother's clubs; the international ideological underpinnings for geopolitics; the constructed international east-west dichotomy which eventually provided justification for a military coup; the installation of international industries particularly within the São Paulo region; the influence of North American and European feminist thought and practice; the critique of international human rights groups against the military regime; the international economic and financial accords which left Brazil with the largest foreign debt of any nation. Thus the context, while particular to Brazil, was not an isolated case but rather incorporated into a global scenario of international interactions.

The issue of violence against women in Brazil was first cloaked in terms of generalized State repression since during the military government state abuses of human rights in the form of torture, murders and disappearances was the most prominent discursive issue among resistance groups inside and outside of Brazil. Male violence against women was articulated in terms of class conflicts, caused by frustration due to unemployment or exploitation or due to lack of education and cultural sophistication. Women's issues were also encoded into general issues of resistance, economic inequalities, labor rights and so on.

Although groups of women had already begun to discuss the issue of violence within a theory of male dominance, the murder of middle- and upper-class women by their partners in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais provided the catalytic event which brought the issue from its enclaved public of feminist discussion groups to a wider array of publics spurred by the mass means of communication. Manifestations against the wife-murders and the use of the 'honor defense' to absolve the accused and the consequent founding of *SOS-Mulher* centers to offer assistance to battered women provided evidence for the women's claim that violence against women was a social issue that affected a large number of women, regardless of class. Thus the interpretation of violence against women evolved from State directed violence and human rights abuses, to wife-murders and the consequent impunity allowed the male partner, to domestic violence that was a result of male dominance.

However, what was of primary importance during this period was that the State was experiencing major modifications through a process of redemocratization in which the

military government was transferring its power to a civilian democratic government. Due to the reorganization of the State, the line between political and private, the role of the economic and domestic and the understanding of ethnic and gender roles also entered into a process of redefinition. Thus, activists were able to bring up the problem of violence against women exactly at the time when shifting relations of power allowed for direct interaction with State structures. Within a period of 5 years, activists succeeded in establishing federal, state and municipal feminine councils on women's rights; in changing the police precinct structure to include women's police stations as a specialized area of police work; of modifying the constitution to protect a number of women's rights not the least of which is an amendment condemning domestic violence; and of establishing women's centers in a number of cities. Their struggle had not been a step-by-step climb through the private sphere to State recognition and policies. Given the chance to make changes within the restructuring process of the State, Brazilian women were able to come up with creative initiatives that, although influenced by international initiatives, were based on logic particular to the needs of the Brazilian situation.

The preliminary significance of the women's police stations, which was perhaps the most popular of initiatives, was the evidence it provided that violence against women in the private sphere was a social problem that affected a large number of women. Like the overflowing shelters in the United States and Europe, long waiting lines at the Brazilian women's police stations fueled further public discussion on the matter and provided legitimacy for further in-order-to demands concerning violence against women. This example allows us to introduce more directly some issues related to intercultural communication and learning, as we compare the struggles of the Brazilian movement against violence with the experiences in countries such as Germany and the United States.

On the Framework of Intercultural Communication

At least initially, women's shelters in Europe and in the United States and the *delegacias* in Brazil, served the same function of providing legitimacy for and expanding the discussion of violence against women. The movement against violence against women in Brazil did not

come out of a shelter movement similar to the movements in the United States and many European countries. In fact, as of the late 1990s there were only a handful of shelters in Brazil. However, even within the 'northern' shelter movements we find differences when comparing the United States and Germany.

In the United States, as described in chapter 2, shelters first sprang up as cooperative ventures among groups of women. Later as they were able to bring the issue into public discussion and gain access to the State, the shelters received government funding with government regulations attached. At the same time activists worked on changing laws and altering the welfare system so that battered women could access benefits. In Germany, however, there is a more encompassing social-democratic system where private non-governmental organizations are less common. Therefore, activists first organized for State funding and only upon receiving it did they open the first shelters. Activists also worked on making the already wide array of Welfare State benefits more available to women leaving their husbands. In both cases, the major goal of working with the women was to help them to escape their violent partners.

In Germany and the Untied States shelters are conceived as places where women could discuss their alternatives, where they could be in the presence of other women with the same problems, offer and receive support and where they could receive information about services available to them (Gerhard 1987). In many cases the shelters were first conceived as spaces for solidarity and sisterhood. Through consciousness raising in the shelters, activists expected that battered women would eventually leave their violent partners. This is evidenced in the rhetoric of shelter materials in both countries – the underlying goal was that once women became conscious of their situation as women and began to reflect on the problems of male dominance, they would come to the conclusion that their best alternative was to free themselves of the violent relationship and separate from their partners or husbands (Göttert 1987; Feministische 1988). This followed the radical feminist line of thinking in which men were defined as the primary cause of women's oppression.

In Brazil few shelters have been created and those few provide only for women who are in situations of extreme violence with a stay period that should not exceed three months.[1] This is different from shelters in Germany where women can stay for as long as a year or in the United States where women can come for a one- or two-day respite after a particularly difficult or traumatic episode of violence. In Brazil, where a large percentage of the population is without adequate housing, providing shelter for women in situations of violence in the same way as in Europe or the United States is unfeasible. In Brazil, shelters are reserved for those women who have supposedly already made the decision to leave a life-threatening relationship and in most cases, space is not given if the woman still has doubts about leaving her partner. The primary concern of shelter staff is to provide a secure and temporary space for women to be able to organize their next move – to find work, housing and start a new life. For this reason the Comvida shelter in São Paulo, Brazil is under the auspices of the police, since it is considered to be a place primarily for security.

Therefore, unlike the United States and many countries of Europe, the installation of shelters was not the initial or primary motivational goal for the women's movement against violence. When shelters were installed in Brazil, they were created under a different set of circumstances and fulfilled needs different from those of the women's movement in Europe and the United States. Likewise, consciousness raising based on group reflection as experienced in the United States and Europe did not become a primary strategy for feminist involvement. Rather, practical needs of housing and work as well as criminal punishment for violent behavior against women have taken priority. Finally, North American and German shelters, for the most part, continue to hold to the ideology of male-dominance, despite international feminist theoretical developments demonstrating the limits of this perspective. It is interesting to note that within a relatively short period of time, the Brazilian women's movement disregarded this ideology in favor of a wider understanding of violence. Thus within international feminist discourse it is important to note that such words as 'shelter,' 'Frauenhaus,' or 'abrigo' although referring to safe houses where women in violent situations

[1] This situation is quickly changing. The amendment to the Brazilian constitution regarding the responsibility of the State to create mechanisms which would hinder domestic violence has given impulse to the creation of municipal shelters and reference centers for women in situations of violence throughout the country.

can stay, were organized under varying circumstances and based on differing needs and ideological grounds.

At this point, however, it is important to bear in mind the complementarity between the approaches of intercultural communication and the discourse model on needs interpretation. Fraser's model, by focusing on discourse, allows us to study the different contextual articulations of violence. During the latter part of the 1980s and into the 1990s, Brazilian women activists and academic experts reflected on their practices in regards to violence against women, noted some limits within their interpretations and developed new language and new paradigms to frame their understanding of the problem. These can be compared to articulations in other contexts.

Originally the focus of activists and experts had been to denounce the violence and lift it up as a social issue. Thus terms such as *mulheres espancadas* and *women, victims of violence* were used together with examples of horrific cases of male violence against women to gain public attention. The ideological framework was based on the idea of male dominance and female subjugation. However, the limits imposed by labeling women as victims and only in relation to the violence they experienced against their male partners were soon identified. Brazilian women theorized that if women were to denounce violence and work towards changes to improve their situation, they had to be understood as active subjects rather than passive victims. Also, within a violent relationship, activists were identifying habits and practices carried out by the women themselves that appeared to perpetuate their condition as victims. Finally, the ideology of female oppression united women in a false category of solidarity and sisterhood without taking into consideration class and race differences. Therefore, rather than reinforce ideas concerning women's unitary inferior position, language and terms would have to be found which did not presuppose the loss of power or categorize women according to one form of oppression. Through their work of developing women's centers, women in Brazil have come up with terminology which provides yet another perspective on violence against women and which responds to some of the dilemmas encountered worldwide among women attempting to *name the problem* of violence against women.

Marilena Chauí's definition of violence, while written in 1985, continues to be a reference in Brazil for violence against women precisely because she regarded violence in general terms by which acts of exploitation and the structures of inequality could be considered forms of violence. Thus violence was defined not only in terms of criminality and physical aggressions but also in terms of social inequalities; it was not framed only in terms of direct interpersonal violence but as a result of societal structures that hindered the voice and development of others. Perhaps due to its general structural approach, Chauí's definition has suffered many interpretations.

However, the turn from *women, victims of violence* and *mulhers espancadas* to *women in situations of violence* and later *gender violence* has provided a major theoretical shift for the Brazilian women's movement. First, *women in situations of violence* defines the situation and not the woman, thereby avoiding labels that would define a woman by the violence she has suffered. Since situations are a combination of circumstances that people can eventually alter or leave, the term also carries a temporary connotation implying the possibility for change and a kernel of hope. The expression also provides a framework to study other forms of violence that could not be easily incorporated into the male dominance theory such as domestic violence against gay couples or racial violence.

The utilization of gender within the Brazilian context coincided with the installation of women's study programs within the universities and was first incorporated by academic anthropologists to describe asymmetrical relationships between the sexes within Mediterranean societies. The study of gender was conceived as a vehicle by which to analyze the relationships between sexes and also as a way to identify the hierarchical organization of these categories. However, its importance within activist groups was that it offered language that would not alienate men the way male dominance theory had done. Brazilian women activists could not narrow their work to focus exclusively on female concerns since the situation of women was so intricately interwoven with class, ethnic group, geographic location and so on. Although much of the work against violence had initially dealt with domestic violence against women by intimate partners, groups working in the area of health, infant prostitution, agrarian reform, racial discrimination and so on were identifying other forms of violence. The study of gender allowed for the analysis of the relationship of gender

with other social categories and thus, potentially offered the possibility to discuss the diversity of experiences among women.

On the other hand, the term *gender violence* obscures the initial focus of defining violence as it is experienced by women. By taking *women* out of the name, the political thrust of the feminist movement to bring the issue of violence against women out of the 'private' sphere and into the political, loses it power by reverting to ambivalent and generic terminology.

The Brazilian experiences could offer new perspectives within the global discussion of violence against women. As stated in chapter 1, the articulation of violence against women varies according to ideological perspective and women activists worldwide have struggled to find terminology that speaks to their cause. For instance, within the English language literature, critiques have been made of the words *battered* and *victim* because women, especially those who have experienced only one violent episode or who have had to endure an occasional slap from their partner, may not consider the physical violence which they encountered as a form of self-identification. Some experts differentiate between the terms *beaten* and *battered,* using the former to describe the condition of those woman who have been hit or suffered some form of physical aggression at one time or another, and the latter to refer to those women who suffer constant and harsh violence from their partners. Even the word *survivor* conjures up harrowing situations that one has had to escape or live through (not all women in situations of violence may have experienced life-threatening circumstances) and also carries with it a certain permanence – once a survivor, always a survivor.

In Germany the term *misshandelt* while defining the woman or person according to the abuse experienced also denotes an inferior position. One can only *misshandel* those people that are weaker or more vulnerable such as the elderly, children, disabled people and apparently women. Likewise, such terminology as *Männergewalt gegen Frauen* or male violence against women speaks only to that violence perpetrated exclusively by the male sex on women, without the possibility of including other forms of violence experienced by women.

Divergent definitions and vocabularies emerged from differing trajectories in the struggle against violence against women. In the United States and Germany the movement against violence first began with the anti-rape movement, followed by the movement against male violence against women particularly within the domestic sphere. Both movements were led by radical feminist tendencies. In the late 1990s discussions revolved around rape within marriage relationships and sexual harassment. Within this trajectory, one could possibly maintain the ideology of male dominance without major inconsistencies since all of the forms of violence within the trajectory could indicate male on female violence.

In Brazil, violence was first defined under a socialist movement as state violence and was modified to include wife-murders and the use of the honor defense by women's movements. Later women organized against domestic and sexual violence including child abuse. By the year 2000, women had included the issue of sexual harassment as a form of violence. Although this trajectory appears to reflect North American and European developments concurrent trajectories within the health, Afro-American, labor and other movements greatly influenced the Brazilian understanding of violence against women. Diversity among women became an important factor in the Brazilian women's movements against violence. The federal investigation into violence against women – the CPI – although laced with methodological errors and later largely disregarded by the media, nevertheless documented the multidimensional character of violence against women in Brazil.

Thus, due to the differences among women based on ethnic group, class and the various locations found within the Brazilian territorial space, Brazilian women experience differing sets of factors and multiple forms of violence. For the most part, women in Brazil have succeeded in establishing violence against women as multidimensional phenomena.

These multiple dimensions elucidate the importance of being able to define the private and political, domestic and economic under varying circumstances. Although the most dominant discourses within the Brazilian women's movement interpret violence against women primarily as domestic violence between intimate partners, other identified forms of violence could be interpreted as occurring within the area of domestic relationships. For instance, the positioning of domestic servants (maids, cleaning women, cooks, nannies, etc.) within the Brazilian class society has put mostly Afro-Brazilian women in vulnerable and

sometimes sexually abusive situations within the 'domestic' sphere. During the writing of the Constitution conservative groups opposing proposals for labor benefits for domestic servants argued that this would impose upon the affectionate and private relations between family members and domestic servants. Gaining labor benefits was identified as a step in protecting women from exploitive labor and sexual abuses by naming their sphere of actuation as economic and public rather than domestic and private.

In regards to rural violence, women have reported abuses by repressive forces that entered their homes with the justification that the property belonged to larger landowners. Thus land disputes and attempts at agrarian reform have resulted in domestic invasions by repressive forces. On the other hand, the landless movement has invaded and settled 'private' property of large landowners with the justification that such land should become public. Here again the divisions between economic and domestic, public and private are of crucial importance in determining the rights of landless people and in demarcating the limits of 'private' invasion.

The overall economic and political picture in which a large part of the population lives in conditions of extreme poverty produces conditions in which they experience violence on a daily basis, struggling to fulfill their basic needs for food and clothing. Taking into consideration these factors it is possible to see how the participation of women in the labor movement and in political parties could be considered a part of the movement against violence. When taking into account issues of rural violence, the rights of domestic workers, and the conditions of extreme poverty, domestic and economic spheres have become blurred as women continue to identify restrictive oppressive conditions that extrapolate the established boundaries.

Thus far I have developed a discursive analysis of violence against women in Brazil, and I have also indicated how international factors can influence the divisions we saw above. This occurs not only in terms of discursive constructions that influence the definitions of violence, but also through concrete interactions that link different contexts. Some of the violent forms mentioned above could be directly linked to intercultural and international interactions such as sex tourism and attempts by foreign aid agencies to impose radical and forceful birth control measures. Poverty and miserable working conditions were also

construed as having their roots in international monetary regulations. Even within 'domestic' confines, one can interpret violence against women as the result of perverse intercultural relations. The ethnic stereotyping of Brazilian women as excessively libidinous was rooted in the initial colonial contacts with Amerindian women, reinforced during the period of slavery and continues to be portrayed by national and international advertising and tourist agencies giving support to the growing sex tourism and mail-order-bride industry. Thus, even 'domestic' violence cannot be understood only as a direct result of Brazilian male violence since battered and abused Brazilian women live with European and North American men in the 'north' or are abused in Brazil by 'northern' tourists. This is a case in which the interplay of images in the north relating to civilized versus primitive conjugate with southern women's situation of poverty versus the idealization of northern wealth create a situation whereby women are subjected to severe dependence and violence within the domestic sphere in Brazil and abroad.

Thus, the concept of violence against women in Brazil is quite broad. In fact, violence could now be defined in Brazil as any type of discriminatory act or policy against women. By bringing up these types of violence, Brazilian women question the boundaries of private and public, domestic and economic as well as national and international, and attempt to redefine them in ways that would benefit the lives of women. I argue that fruitful discussion could come from international dialogue in regards to defining and conceptualizing violence against women and that Brazilian women could offer interesting perspectives in this area. Moreover, the examples from Brazil demonstrate the interrelationship between domestic violence and intercultural contacts.

Besides coming up with new terminology and conceptualizations of violence that interpreted the diversity of women's experiences within Brazil, activists also began to analyze the forces that were depoliticizing their strategies against violence. The success of the police stations resulted in colliding interests that diverted the work of the stations from what feminists had originally envisioned. Feminist council members were replaced by partisan representatives of the current administrations. Women's centers were staffed by state employees who were uncommitted to the feminist struggle. Hard fought battles for State

services were stalled through the intricacies of administrative funding. Finally, nicely worded constitutional amendments stayed on paper while legislators disputed the approval of laws.

By infiltrating the State, women ran up against structures and practices that ran counter to their gender-defined interests. If the State had opened up possibilities for change at the end of the 1980s, by the 1990s opposing interests had been able to reorganize and present counter interpretations. In some situations, mere bureaucratic slowness and incompetence was enough to disable policies designed for women in situations of violence. Municipal women's centers that provided models for gender-directed policies were at the mercy of the current administration. Those centers that were able to maintain stability did so because the administration supported their work. In most cases elected officials from the Worker's Party were most sympathetic to feminist policies but even within supportive governments, problems of bureaucracy and funding abounded.

Openly admitting their lack of experience within the State apparatus, activists struggled with the political games inherent in government institutions, and gained experience through praxis. Others sought to influence the State through the organization of autonomous non-governmental agencies which monitored legislation, published materials, provided services to women, organized campaigns, and pressured municipal, state or federal governments to develop policies directed to the needs of women. However, this prompted discussions among activists as to whether non-governmental agencies were not taking over activities that the State should fulfill, thereby allowing the State to wash its hands of the matter.

Thus, activists through their attempts to infiltrate the State have proposed a number of questions in terms of their relationship with the State. When women began to work autonomously in the *SOS-Mulher* they did so without State support or intervention. Their goals were also directed towards producing attitudinal changes among the women although some centers also worked politically against the honor defense and with the police stations. Their consciousness-raising strategies were not successful largely because they did not account for the material and security needs of the women, nor could they possibly fulfill all of these needs. Also their consciousness-raising activities were geared towards the

experiences and needs of the volunteers and did not reflect the social context of the working-class women who came for assistance.

The State at this time was a military regime and construed as the ultimate example of patriarchal power. However, when the military regime progressively opened channels for the democratic organization of the State, women were quick to develop new conceptions of State power. In a context of State transformation women saw the possibilities for shaping the State themselves. Thus they changed their focus from autonomous or resistance work to infiltrating the State with councils, police stations and municipal centers and stipulating important changes in the constitution.

While the women's movement against violence had multiple goals, including cultural changes in attitudes and behavior, they also perceived the need to take advantage of the opportunities offered at the moment to make changes within the formal institutions of the State. Had they maintained an attitude that the State was synonymous with male power, an opinion that many women theorists still hold, they would have lost what has become a historical opportunity to make gender-specific changes within the State structure of the Brazilian nation. These changes were partial and at times merely punctual interventions although, seemingly permanent changes in the constitution and the laws have been achieved.

The women's movement against violence, by focusing its activity on the restructuring process of the State, has consequently demanded that the State respond to almost all of its in-order-to chain of demands. However, despite constitutional amendments, laws and oppositional infiltration of the State, women's groups have been frustrated by the lack of efficiency, depoliticizing interests within State structures and of the inability of the State to instrumentalize laws. Therefore, by stopping at the State, the in-order-to chain of demands is cut short. Simply providing women's police stations or adding amendments to the Constitution will not in and of itself provide polices and interventions within a feminist frame of reference.

Fraser's model could be useful here in differentiating between the private, the political, the social, and the State for it is in the interpretations of these areas that questions have emerged. The two definitions that Fraser offers for the political are insightful here: institutionalized structures of the State apparatus; or that which has gone through discursive

channel and has been contested publicly. For the most part, the Brazilians women's movement has identified the political in terms of the institutionalized government apparatus, thus, conceiving the political as synonymous with the State. Fraser has demonstrated through her model that what is political is not necessarily part of the State structure and vice versa. Therefore, autonomous non-governmental organizations can work politically outside the State and continue to politicize the issue of violence against women while State centers can depoliticize an issue through inefficiency, bureaucratic entanglements, corruption, co-optation and so on. Likewise, because a center offers psychological and material help for women does not necessarily depoliticize the issue. It seems obvious that women in situations of violence would need emotional and material support. Contrary to the idea held by many Brazilian activists that such strategies are intrinsically assistentialist, meaning nonpolitical, women could interpret these needs as political rights that the state or civil society should provide women in situations of violence. Even psychological counseling can have a political feminist basis.

Moreover, the autonomous shelter movement in Germany, although beset by its own problems of political isolation, could nevertheless provide an example for Brazilian women. Germany also represents a country where social movements place the major burden on the State to fulfill the needs of the population. However, feminist activists in Germany based their movement on non-hierarchical ideological methodology, thus they demanded that the State provide support for the women's shelters, but allow the shelters to maintain their organizational autonomy. Although the German activists must continually negotiate with the State for funding, an activity which involves considerable time and energy, they are allowed to chose their own staff, and determine the methodology and structure of the work in the shelters.

The implementation of policies and services has been perhaps the weakest point within the Brazilian's women's movement against violence. Since women's movements have been motivated by the ideological conception that violence against women is a social issue and therefore a responsibility for State intervention, women have, in effect, turned over all responsibilities for implementation to the State. Considered State 'owned' services and

interventions, these initiatives have been placed at the mercy of depoliticizing currents within the State.

Thus women have not secured the quality or feminist ideological basis for these interventions. The quality of services depends more on the particular talents and experiences of the women who work in these agencies and stations. This is particularly true of the women's police stations but is also apparent in municipal centers where state employees may or may not have the inclination to develop feminist strategies for direct work with women in situations of violence. These municipal initiatives run the risk of becoming public service centers that simply assist the basic needs of these women for safety and emotional support without effectively developing strategies for changing asymmetrical gender relations.

Social workers and psychologists have not sufficiently dispersed general guidelines for direct work with women in situations of violence. Rather, each house or center has developed strategies based on the ideological understanding of the women staff and their own specialized theoretical training. Attempts to exchange ideas concerning direct interventions have been irregular and insufficient.

Feminists have also had to grabble with how women in situations of violence use and interpret State interventions. For instance, many of the women who go to the police stations are not interested in registering a crime; that is they do not want to make theirs a political case. In fact, the women themselves have had the accumulated effect of depoliticizing the issue of violence against women by expecting the police to carry on a personalized service for them. They have construed the police as the necessary authority figure that they need to convince their partners to change. This is a personal private goal, not a political one. They have also used the police for their 'therapeutic' needs by coming in regularly to speak to the policewomen of their problems much like middle- and upper-class women do with therapists. This knot between the private and political needs of women in situations of violence has not been successfully administered by Brazilian women activists or theorists. In fact, it is an unanswered question in many other countries as well.

Therefore, due to the opportunity afforded women to make transformations in the State, they became too trusting in the State to perform according to their ideals. By focusing on installation of policies and practices they paid less attention to implementation. This, of

course, is a general problem in Brazil. Hampered by fiscal problems, international debts, outside regulatory impositions, a strong elite with particular interests and a population in extreme need, the State or civil society has not met even the basic needs of a large section of the population. Brazil has a very weak history in the State implementation of social benefits.

However, lack of theories and practices to effect social change by working directly with people in need is *not* a generalized problem in Brazil. Brazilian activists and scholars have produced a wealth of educational and practical tools designed for instigating social change. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for example provided strong theoretical basis and practical guidelines for literacy campaigns. Implicit in these guidelines was respect for the particular situation and the contextualization of methods for the specific population. Therefore, Freire's work has been read world wide and adapted for different cultures and various problems beyond literacy including violence against women.

Those groups that have had most success in developing direct practical methodology are those working with street children in which violence has also been a principle issue. Groups such as Axé Bahia have concentrated on cultural identity and have used art, dance, music and so on to develop social and political awareness among the children and adolescents as well as the general population. They have also been involved in political initiatives against racial discrimination, violence and in favor of children's rights.

As Brazilian women reinterpret the women's movements in the 1970s and 1980s, they have noted that even when women espoused generalized issues and organized campaigns based on practical rather than strategic gender-goals they were nonetheless changing their attitudes and behaviors in regards to their roles as women. Thus women's organizing in and of itself has the potential to produce cultural and social changes which have transformed gender relations particularly in reference to everyday life and the modifications that can occur on the micro-scale. Caldeira, Gregori and Viezzer gave some indications in the direction of developing activities whereby women would begin to question their gender-specific situation. They noted how women in neighborhood groups did this even when violence was not a topic of discussion. According to these authors, once women become more involved in political activities, that is, once they become active citizens working within civil society, they begin to question hierarchical gender relationships and change their behavior. These insights make a

link between the struggle against violence against women and the struggle for *cidadania* among the general population.

Thus, there exist ideological and practical tools which could be incorporated into the interventions and policies against violence and which could produce interesting inroads to the work with women in situations of violence while maintaining the political nature of the feminist position against violence. In other words, Brazilian women do not have to look very far to find practical and theoretical models for intervention within their own context. This I consider to be a challenge for the Brazilian situation.

Moreover, while continuing to pressure and infiltrate the state, the Brazilian women's movement could take note from Fraser's model that the development of the 'social' is a requirement for political democratic discourse. The existence of the political as Fraser prefers to denote it, implies the existence of a discursive arena by which people and groups contest existing boundaries between private and political, domestic and economic and dispute interpretations of needs. Without a strong civil society that is organized and conscious of its social rights, that enters into public discussions and makes demands on public institutions, both non-governmental and governmental, it is hardly possible to maintain democratic State structures. Thus, the development of a civil society in Brazil is important for the women's movement because women cannot advance their cause any farther than the limited democratic structures allow. If a weak and immobile civil society does not contest police abuses, impunity allowed by the courts, political corruption and general state inefficiency, women cannot expect that particular State programs designed to meet the needs of women in situations of violence would function free of these impediments.

There is some indication that women have already begun to value the need for a strong civil society and generalized awareness of *cidadania*. Thus while focusing in on gender-specific violence was a necessary step in the development of the understanding of violence against women in Brazil, currently there appears to be more of a need for women to include broader issues within their platforms such as the focus on citizenship, and the encouragement of public participation not only within but also outside of the strictly institutional political channels. The fact that the movement has fragmented and women have

developed centers based on particular issues demonstrates the need for at least a general focus that could facilitate dialogue.

Despite the diversity apparent in the social movements, there are excluded women within the Brazilian women's movements that have not been given a voice within the political struggles. Although the issues of ecology and the delineation of Amerindian lands have reached the generalized public, information or articulations from the Amerindian women remains scarce. Japanese, Korean, Lebanese Brazilian women among others, while acknowledged as contributors to Brazilian diversity, have often been grouped within the general idea of *mulata* or simply ignored. Brazilian activists in general know little of how these women experience violence. Lesbian women while active in the international conferences have not had their particular claims incorporated into the overall issue of violence against women. Public talk on the particular situation of disabled women and elderly women has been sparse. More groups of women could be added. Thus, despite the acknowledgment of diversity, Brazilian women need to learn how to hear those women who have not yet gained recognition.

For a Discursive Intercultural Framework

The particularities of the Brazilian contexts of violence against women and the multifarious forms of the movements against this problem have been presented in detail. We have also discussed common points and divergences between the Brazilian situation and other experiences such as those of the women's movements in the United States and Germany. Yet, there are more direct ways for women to explore their differing perspectives, common strategies and forms of interconnection.

In the last decades, women have given value to international conferences, networks and agreements. Within the discourses about women struggling against violence, the analysis of asymmetric international relations has become part of the discourse concerning the condition of women in Brazil. From the initial discourses on slavery, to issues of capitalism versus communism, women have banded with male-led organizations because they understood these struggles as benefiting the lives of women. Within the military dictatorship,

some women experts claimed that the military was a form of extreme patriarchy and sanctioned by international patriarchal forces. However, once democratic channels were opened, women were able to focus on more gender-specific aspects of their struggle, relationships between intimates for example, and were successful in making gender-specific violence against women a legitimate political issues. Due to Brazil's multicultural make-up and the asymmetrical relations between these cultures based on ethnic, class and geographic factors, violence against women was soon broadened to include the experiences of women suffering other forms of gender-specific violence such as racial violence, international imperialism, asymmetrical cultural relations and so on.

However, international and intercultural contacts have not always been negative. Brazilian women within the violence against women movement have utilized the international accords that they themselves helped to formulate to pressure their government to introduce laws and policies directed at hindering violence against women. I have noted that the utilization of such agreements has been motivated by political practices designed to influence changes within the Brazil State, rather than by offering recall to philosophical notions of universal human rights. Brazilian women, among other women, have in fact instrumentalized the concept of human rights to support their cause at home. Also, most of the non-governmental agencies in Brazil depend on international funding to operate. Perhaps while international contacts has consistently been an issue in the discourses concerning Brazilian politics and culture, women are more aware of their importance and have made use of these accords and supports much more explicitly than women within the United States or Europe. While they identify international relations as potentially violent and harmful, they have also used the opportunity when made available to strengthen their cause though a process of international networks and agreements.

At the beginning of this study, I outlined my goals based on intercultural communication and learning. If we look to the Brazilian women's movements against violence, a number of issues arise that could contribute to the international discussion on violence against women. First the Brazilian women have articulated, at least internally, the various forms violence can take within a postcolonial multicultural nation. Thy have produced language and theory that incorporates women's diversity and the multidimensional

conception of violence against women. They have made creative initiatives within the State apparatus such as the police stations that have already been modeled in other countries. They have helped to word international agreements and have employed universal values such as human rights within their particular context. They have provided other models to combat violence beyond the shelter model. They have had to deal with the ambiguities of the Church and repressive forces. However, while they have provided strategies for State infiltration they have needed more sophisticated understandings of the State in relation to the social and political and private realms, thus, they could benefit from contacts with women in other contexts who have worked more in this direction.

Finally, there are some issues such as the exploitation of labor, sex tourism, non-symmetrical international economic agreements, and the prioritizing of international funding agencies, which produce asymmetrical relations between women in differing countries. Therefore, it is important that we understand the consequences of international and intercultural interactions and develop means to communicate with and learn from each other if we are interested in preventing violence against women.

Thus, in response to my question in the introduction, I have shown a number of areas in which communication and learning about the movement against violence in Brazil would be beneficial and instructive to women of other countries. Unfortunately, the subaltern status ascribed to Brazil as a 'third world,' postcolonial State appears to have impeded communication and learning among those who are interested in studying and working against violence. The international literature continues to focus on English language studies within English speaking or 'first-world' nations. When attempts are made to include the experiences of women's movements in other countries, they are usually organized around the format of offering various international 'perspectives' on violence in which case examples are provided as if each country developed in isolation from others and in which the terminology and measuring units are based on the ideological premises of academics and activists working in the 'north.' To measure feminist progress in terms of the number of shelters installed is as parochially based and potentially ethnocentric a means to analyze the struggle of women against violence as counting the number of women's police stations.

Thus, in order to learn from the Brazilian 'case' it is important that we reconsider our preconceived notions not only about violence but also about the functioning of the State, the position of postcolonial nations, the divisions between private and public, the form that cultural identities take, the objectives and strategies of women's groups, the alternatives available and our interconnections.

I hope to have demonstrated that providing ideas for 'strategies' cannot be simply an issue of transferring one model to another context or developing singular goals within an isolated situation. Violence against women in Brazil can no longer be reduced to a unitary cause or interpretation. It is context based, multidimensional and intercultural. A discursive framework of intercultural communication and learning about violence against women must involve, therefore, willingness to listen, openness to exchange, tolerance for ambiguities, acknowledgment of differences and appreciation for complexities.

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